UTGARD

Notes of a Vagabondage

Solsness

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"On a juniper in Thule
A thrush sings low,
I shall some day win to Thule
As I found the Land of Woe.'

—[German Tramp Song.]

SPECIAL LIMITED EDITION

UTGARD

Embodying Sundry Notes of a Wanderjahr on Hyperborean Shores

BY

LARS PORSENNA SOLSNESS

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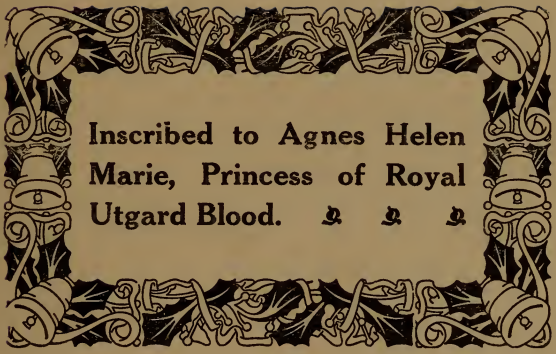
Inscribed to Agnes Helen
Marie, Princess of Royal
Utgard Blood.

Preface.

As much has been written of late by appreciative travellers in parts described in this little volume, it has been my aim to exclude from its pages all such details as by necessity form the bulk of most books of travel in order to dwell more particularly on sundry features of special interest.

It is but little realized in our feverish days what potent agencies of moral and political uplift there have come to mankind from the high North. "Three times," says Professor Alexander Bugge, "has the poetry of Norway conquered the world. First, the Eddic songs; then, the Sagas; and lately the

writings of Ibsen and Bjornson." To these might be added another world-moving force from the same source, viz.: the Norman influence, without which individual rights would even in our times be an unknown quantity.

As these Northmen of to-day are as virile of mind as they are proverbially generous of heart, it is not beyond the most short-sighted of visionaries to foretell even greater things to follow.

It is on a fringe of this rare Earth and on its sombre, uncontaminated inhabitants, that these flickering rays of searchlight are cast in hopes of arousing a more general interest in both on the part of American travellers.

L. P. S.

Steamer Chair Studies.

"To dream a bright, fleeting, midsummer night's dream—among our mountains or out by the sea." —Henrik Ibsen.

It is into the coves and fjords of the old time Viking sea-rovers that these considerations take their way. For there—in all fitness of things—Nature displays singular powers. Forbidding of aspect, no doubt, as this region is on first sight, it wins us ultimately by reason of its congenial, effusive inhabitants as well as by its extraordinary and unforgettable natural impressiveness.

What on the map in Baedeker appears like a convulsive interlocking of alternate arms of sea and land, manifests itself to the observer on the

steamer's deck as an endless array of desolate, dun-colored necks and headlands,—a tangle of frowning, precipitous masses of rock separated by a corresponding confusion of narrow sounds, fjords and channels.

Seaward of this prodigious maze, lies impregnable natural defences blockading the coast for about a thousand miles,—the multiple chain of innumerable islands, shoals, reefs and skerries.

The first thought that comes to the stranger within these gates of rock is of the nigh inconceivable fact that there should be in this world to-day a race so bold as to establish their homes on these perilous, foam-drenched crags. In passing we learn that modern Vikings not only cherish these ancestral ledges, but that they even succeed in getting perhaps more out of life than is the lot of average mortals.

Looking down the bright vistas of Norse mythology, the source of much present-day literary inspiration, we find

at the time the mortal gods of Valhalla rose out of the yawning void of the Ginunga-chasm the mention of an "outermost inhabitable border," where dwelled a race of huge-limbed giants, the Jotners. These Jotners were a constant irritation and source of worry to their gods. These "rocks that hemmed in the ocean" were given the name of "Utgard." Here they fancied lived Loki, who learned treachery from the sea. This Utgard-Loki, to revenge himself on his fellow deities who ill-treated him, left the following accursed brood. His daughter Hela reigned over the damned in misty Niflheim; the Fenris-wolf typifies desolation; while the dreaded Mid-Earth serpent ominously encircles the Heimskringla, the home of the living.

To a strongly mythopoeic mentality such as that of the pagan Norse, these gloomy creations must have easily suggested themselves here in this grotesque coast-landscape.

Åstern, as we pick our way carefully northward along the sheltered inner *led,* lies the quaint, old Hansa-city Bergen. In the presence of settling gloom, one regrets having parted with the effable, unctuous Bergenese. One loves to reflect on the odd contrast of the busy harbor, *Vaagen,* and the lazy life on the central square, the *Torvet,* with its sprinkle of red-bodiced, white-hooded peasant women and Strils—that indomitable and mysterious race of Norse-Kelts, which seems to serve a double purpose, viz., supplying fish to the citizens and a target for the incessent jeers and gibes of the loungers about the city Billingsgate, the *Nedre Torvet*—both with the same lazy, cheerful demeanor.

But what lends a character of refined mediaevalism to the Bergen streets is the rubicund, smiling, high-hatted trader in cod and herring, who is neither too busy nor too proud to walk between his counting-house and his

residence and to stop and chat with people on the way. It is he forsooth that has "argosies on India" yet no Shylock in the realm would dare insinuate that his means were thereby "in supposition."

It was once a Bergen ship-monger who said to his son home from the University: "You are too gifted, my boy, to throw yourself away on Jurisprudence or the Ministry. You may develop talents of a skipper," which runs quite contrary to the general sentiment in the premises, especially in Norway.

A ship library is an admirable institution in these parts, where one soon tires of looking at the bizarre scenery. The sameness of the scene cannot help but weary.

The birch, firs and spruce which grow so profusely in the inland valleys appear here only in the cracks and crevasses and consequently as caricatures. A stiff crop of heather, indomitable as the people itself, is nibbled here and there by equally invincible goats that scan us disdainfully—as it were—in passing.

The dominant impression one carries with him below to one's dreams at the end of each dismal day's journey—and into future reflections—is that of rocks and water,—an endless inferno of dark precipitous rocks and agitated, swashing, green-blue water.

At the entrance to Nordfjord lies the

Bremanger island. On its North-east corner rises the Hornellen Mountain, a wall of blue rock, three thousand feet.

This "Smalsarhorn" of the Sagas was visited by King Olaf about the year 1000. No mountain in" Lochlin" is more worthy of the lines of Ossian. Were it not that it gives rise to no river except possibly in case of deluge, we might have reason to believe it to be the Gormal of the ancient Keltic bard. He describes it in a storm such as only he can: "Abrupt rises Gormal in snow. The tempest rolls dark on his sides, but calm above his vast forehead appears. White-issuing, from the skirts of his storms, the troubled torrents pour down his sides. Joining as they roar along, they bear Torno in foam to the main. His shaggy brow waves dark above his gathered rage."

Our ship describes a semicircle about the base of this mountain. The captain causes the ship's whistles to be blown

sharply, resulting in a startling series of long-continued, tumultuous echoes. A swarm of sea-gulls and some eagles, frightened from their resting places high up in the rock,—soared out over our heads, circled about for a time to return ultimately reassured to their nests. As we estimated from the echoes and found later to be true the summit of the mountain extended a considerable distance above the clouds.

Between the Bremanger island and the Rungsundoe, the sea boils and froths. The captain informs us these are the narrows through which the tidewater is drawn into or emptied out of the extensive basin of the Nordfjord, to which fact the phenomenon is due. The swiftness of the current requires special care lest the ship is drawn against the rocks.

As we proceed northward the country appears very extraordinary. Large, fleeing clouds at times obscure the contracted view of the sky between the

mountain-tops. A weird light enhances the effect and adds mysticism to the unusual shifting panorama.

As we approach Cape Stadt, the breeze over our port is augmented to a gale. This is the breaking of worse news to come,—for soon we shall be forced into the open Atlantic through a break in the chain of islands. Nocturnal sea-birds flock shriekingly landwards. These are Petrels, so called after St. Peter from their appearance of walking over the waves. Gloom and desolation increases with each mile put behind us. The sea is white. Fishermen's cottages are less in evidence and appear to be more wanting in those little trifles that go to make home happy.

On the sides of the cliffs, in the crevices and scaurs, huge shadows sit in the twilight like trolls or dragons, grim of form and unfriendly and vengeful of mien, waiting to pounce upon the reckless intruder.

Westward, the islands get smaller,

flatter and fewer, in the teeth of the driving gale. In the hard but effective school of many knocks, these comminuted bits of Norseland have had their pride extracted. They look frightened and discouraged as compared with the bold peaks eastward. However, as a brood of Mother Norway they are not being treated step-motherly. It is among these, the most ill-used of her children, that she stretches her rocky arms most tenderly and protectingly.

At Ulfsvaag we plunge suddenly into the tempestuous ocean. High up on the mesa of Cape Stadt, hence fully exposed to the inclemency of the elements, —stands a lonely bonder home. Its little windows spy over the sea north, west and south. It impreses one that it must be a melancholy, lonely existence, to be thus constantly face to face with nothing but blank, limitless water. And yet, the occupants of the weather-beaten gard likely look at it differently.

Steamers we pass lurch heavily, exposing occasionally the black keel gradually from stem to stern. Many passengers are apprehensive. Only a company of ubiquitous English tourists are in high glee. They are determined to weather it out above deck. The intrepid young ladies of the company strap themselves to the hand-rails on

the sheltered side of the companion-way. It is Britannia ruling the ocean. As the company stands in line singing or shouting to make themselves heard above the roar of the tempest, they are forced in turn, or it may be several at a time, to venture on risky excursions to the star-board rail, there to make spontaneous offerings to the angry sea-god, immediately, however, to resume their former positions.

Waxed mighty in their course from far-off Greenland and the Polar seas, the waves appear like good-sized mountain ridges. Ground-break, we are told by the crew, frequently takes place here at over sixty feet. Our ship pursues a course just outside the choppy belt nearest the rocks where ponderous, tergiversant masses of water jostle one another madly. South-westward the sea resembles an extensive tented camp, with parallel "company streets," each irregular line of dark-blue "canvas" emitting twisted, white, wind-tossed

"smoke" at the crest.

On our right, the impassive rocks receive the dashing masses with relentless fortitude. It is a spectacular drama that thrills. Inorganic Nature is in tumultuous abandon. It is a dissipation with outlay of tremendous energy. With whatever amount of passionate vehemence the coast defences are bombarded, with that same degree of calm determination is the assault met on the part of the cliffs.

The human mind feels a kinship with these elements at war, yet the rumble of the breakers and the tossing of the ship fills one's heart with dread and dismay. The sea as well as the atmosphere observes a sinister rhytmicality. When for a moment there is a cessation of shrill wailing through the rigging, the hoarse panting of the forces at work sounds like the guttural rattle of exhausted fighters. The lines of Goethe come to mind:

"Welch ein schauspiel;

Aber, ach, ein schauspiel nur,—
Wo fass ich dich unendliche natur?''

Occasionally a wave seems endowed with greater ambition than its fellows. It moves on the shoulders of the others and consequently reaches higher up the slanting brow of the rock. There, under the jagged edge of the heather, it curles and strains in many covetous tongues. For one brief moment it disobeys the law of gravitation. Then losing their entity and form, the tongues coalesce with others of their kind, flatten and fall—first on those nearest, thence vanquished and spent the descent is rapid to the foot of the cliffs, where they moan and wail unheard, undergoing final death and dissolution among the cold, impassionate base rocks. But the atoms of the dead are carried to where they are needed to perpetuate the process, completing the cycle by supplying energy to waves in the making.

In the vernacular this is called *Brenning,* from its resemblance to a roaring fire.

The relentlessness of the waves and the shore rocks is inwardly reflected in the lives of the hardy race that inhabit both; a relentlessness, not only as to others but to themselves as well. Ibsen's drama "Brand", the scene of which is laid in these parts, portrays this character very forcibly. From the dawn of their history, conflict is the key-note of their lives. In the same image is made the naive conception of the constantly raging world-war between the Utgard-giants and the Valhalla gods. The only national glory to the Norse of old as well as their private enjoyment was war. It was ushered in with merriment as among

the American Indians. The god of war, Woden, was also the god of poetry. Fighting was the delight of the Einherjars while in the flesh as well as their happiness after death. Just as a parsimonious nature never ceases to refuse yielding a sustenance without a struggle, so there is in the lives of these coast dwellers no *dulce otium* leading to physical and moral decay. The sway of the Valhalla gods outlasted the sensuous deities of Olymp over a thousand years, because the Aasgard deities kept constantly fighting, if not with the Jotners, then surely among themselves.

Conflict among the Norse, was not always of their own choice, but a contingency forced upon them and was strangely devoid of the tragic. Living scattered on their islands and never united otherwise than by a nominal government, whereof they knew but little, and for which they cared less, the men of Utgard grew for centuries used

to act by themselves independently and were usually a failure as a gregarious entity.

At Vanelvegap we enter the interesting province of Sondmore and once more push forward in our circuitous, zigzag route in the friendly shelter of a thousand islands. Sundered and torn as Sondmore looks with its fjords and sounds, it was by no means ever a negligible fringe of Viking-land. Hence came that odd product of a dawning civilization, the poet Ivar Aasen, and set his mark on the intellectuality of the nation. Writing in his crude peasant tongue he produced much that is good. The chaos and confusion of tongues that at present divide the land into two opposing camps, those for and those against the general adoption of this

peasant language,—is not to be altogether charged to him.

There is a fresh, stimulating odor of the sea and of dessicated kelp and wrack as we glide along. The dog-headed *kobbe*, a specie of dolphins, raise their dripping faces out of the water to look at us, plunging back into their briny element with many frolicsome movements.

From this same Sondmore another Utgard giant sallied forth long ago to set the stamp of these parts indelibly upon the following chapters of world history. That was Rollo—of such large frame that no horse could carry him and hence was named the Walker. It seems odd that these islands should be the Bethlehem of the world's political liberties. Yet, hence came the fathers of those bold and upright men who wrested for good the scepter from Tyranny at Runnymede. These parts were the "*officina gentium*" the "Northern

hive'' and the ''Manufactory of nations'' of mediaeval writers, who, judging from the never-ceasing streams of Vikings flocking southward, thought these coasts thickly populated.

It was, however, not willingly that Rollo exchanged his birthright of Viking chieftain for the position of sovereign prince of the better half of France. By King Harold's decree he was outlawed. Rollo's father was the influential Earl Ragnvald of the island of Vigra, which was pointed out to us by the captain some distance to the west of our course. This Ragnvald of More was the king's best friend in the entire realm, on which fact it is possible that Rollo relied for escaping the consequences of his merely technical wrong-doings. Says Snorre, the Viking historian:

'' . . . Now, King Harold was feasting at Mere, at Earl Ragnvald's, and had now gotten under him all the land (of Norway). So King Harold took a

bath and then let his hair be combed and then Ragnvald sheared it. And heretofore it had been uncombed and unsheared for ten winters. Aforetime he had been called Harold Luva (or Lurva) that is the Shock-headed. But now Earl Ragnvald gave him a by-name and called him Haarfager, that is fair-haired, and all who saw him said it was a most proper name, for he had most plentious hair and goodly."

At all events, this was before pull tempered the decrees of princes and magistrates. It is said that Rollo's mother, Hild, travelled the several hundred miles, and mostly afoot—to the king's gard to plead her wayward son's cause. With the relentlessness of the Northern rocks, wind and frost, the king was uncompromising and refused to cancel or modify his orders with reference to Rollo, his great debt to Earl Ragnvald notwithstanding.

Quote Hild:

"It is a hazardous game
With such a wolf to grapple.
Why so severe, O Master?"

Rollo was not the man a warring chieftain, loose in the saddle, would ordinarily let go. However, straight as flies the crow, Rollo and his men sailed to the Hebrides, and thence to Northern France. What Julius Caesar and his legions failed to accomplish, after eight years' trial, viz., subdue the Galls, Rollo and his men did forthwith. There is one episode in this connection which is interesting as it goes to show the in-born disrespect of Vikings for established customs, as well as their aversion for pomp and ceremonies. Still one finds in Norway examples of the same refreshing spirit of moral fearlessness and independence.

During the negotiations leading to the Peace of Claire-en-Epte in the year 912, it was suggested that Rollo, in accordance with feudal custom should acknowledge his vassalage under the

king of France by kissing the latter's foot. Now feudalism, that institution of inequality and unrighteousness, never reached Norway. Nor did the Viking chieftains want to hear of it. Rollo objected to the kissing-scene strenuously. His pride as a Norseman forbade it. "Never," quoth he, "will I bend my knees before the knees of any, and I will kiss the foot of none." Saying this, his men gave their assent by shouting defiantly at the French, calling them many ribald names, which the French likely did not understand the exact meaning of. After diverse unsuccessful attempts to settle the matter, it was suggested that the kissing be done by proxy. Thereupon at the appointed time and in the presence of the court retinue, a brawny Viking strode up to where the king stood, but instead of kneeling, he grasped the king's foot and raised it to his bearded lips with the obvious consequence that the monarch sprawled on the ground, *sans*

facon and *sans ceremonie.* The Sondmorers in glee sent forth a great shout of laughter.

Contrary to one's expectation, the incident mentioned seems not to have marred the occasion much if any. After the French king had dusted his taffeta doublet, he accepted Rollo as his dutiful son-in-law and ally.

The second duke of Normandy was Rollo's son William Longsword, killed by Arnulf of Flanders; the third, Richard the Fearless. "These Norman dukes possessed eminently all the qualities characterizing heroes,—bravery, liberality, generousness and justice." Nor did they lack pride.

It was Robert the Magnificent, the sixth duke, while visiting the emperor at Constantinople, who remarked to the imperial court attendants: "Take it away. A mantle that has touched the ground is not fit to cover the shoulders of a Norman." The most ambitious of all the Norman dukes was William who

beat the English at Hastings in 1066 and whose descendant in the 28th generation is King George V of England. Norman influence reached America, which it wrenched from degenerate Latins.

William the Conqueror just before the battle of Hastings addressed his army of adventurers as follows:

"By the splendor of God, did you not, you and your ancestors, capture the king of the French and imprison him at Rouen till he restored Normandy to the boy Richard, your duke, on the express condition that in every interview between the French king and the Norman duke, the latter should be girded with a sword, and the former present himself without a sword or even a dagger?"

A scourge as the Vikings were to mediaeval Europe, they were necessary and their influence was ultimately in the interest of peace, order and civilization. Nor were they per-

haps as rapaceous and avaricious as described by some historians. Thus, when Rollo in Friesland had taken prisoner the Count Rainier, he was offered all the gold possessed by his wife. He returned half of the gold and surrendered the count.

The following is interesting as showing the system maintained by these breviloquent Vikings in the matter of their internal relations.

As Rollo and his men made their famous dash in the direction of Paris they were met by Hastings, or Hastinec, another Viking, who addressed them as follows:

"Valliant warriors, whence come ye? What seek ye here? What is the name of your lord and master?"

Said Rollo, "We be Norsemen, and all be equally masters amongst us. We be come to drive out the inhabitants of this land and to subject it as our own country; but who art thou who speakest so glibly?"

"I am Hastinec you have heard of. Will ye yield to King Charles?"

"We yield," was Rollo's answer, "to none. All that we shall take by our arms we shall keep as our right. Go and tell this if thou willst to the king, whose envoy thou boastest to be."

Glorious as appear to us the lives of these Norman chieftains, they were at the same time not without their quota of Norse disruptive discord. Thus Henry the Second, the tenth duke of Normandy and King of England, whose life had been a constant war with his sons, was an especial victim of family hatred. "Shame," said he, "shame and hishonor on a vanquished king. Cursed be the day of my birth. Cursed the sons I leave behind me." Nor could prayers and entreaties on the part of his ministers of religion induce him to retract his maledictions. He died in 1198 of a broken heart. Though the most powerful of European princes of his day, reigning over England, Ireland

and the better half of France, his body, after death, was treated with the same neglect and indignity as was that of William the Conqueror. There was difficulty in finding anybody willing to wrap the royal corpse in a winding-sheet.

Some assistants wished, it is true, to cover the body with the royal insignia, but the guardians of the royal treasury would not permit the expense therewith connected. All that was valuable was plundered by marauding nobles and servants. The most urgent supplication could only produce a damaged sceptre and a ring of small price. Instead of a crown his head was covered with gold tinsel taken from a woman's dress, and in this humble and grotesque style we are told, "Henry Plantagenet, or Broomcorn, son of Jeoffry, King of England, Duke of Normandy, Aquitaine, Brittany, Count of Maine and Anjou, and Lord of Tours and Amboise—descended to his grave."

All Christian rulers of the world today are descendants of Rollo of Vigra. Some of his children remained at home in Sondmore, as did his brothers Tore Hallad, Einar, Rollaug and others. Hallad later won the Orkneys from other Vikings and settled there for good, as he was on bad terms with his father, the Earl Ragnvald. A prolific race, as these people are, the cousins of the rulers of Europe are very numerous today in Sondmore, a cousinship which the bold, blue-eyed Utgarder will tell you he is not the least proud of.

In the meantime our ship has proceeded out of the vicinity of historic Vigra, the heart of erstwhile Normandy.

Utgard has its poets and writers of to-day. Of these, particularly one, Jacob Hilditch, grasps its true spirit in the following:

"These grey skerries and holms with their sounds and channels—with their placid waters back of them—with their green plains, their weeping-birch under the mountains and their little red cabins—possess a surprising power over the minds of certain people. Even if it is only for a single time that you pass by, you will never forget them. They will reach you and attract you in that picture you summon up, when once far away you close your eyes for a minute to shut out new environs, to dwell once

more in this wonderland of the lofty North.

"But the one that has lived his childhood and early youth here,—he is at a certain disadvantage if he migrates,—because he can never forget these same grey skerries and holms. There is such a thing as that a few minds lit with a spirit of unrest and a craving for something greater than what these parts afford—rush into the world. Years pass. It may be that they are on the verge of being swept into the bottomless stream of human sewerage,—that they suffer injury to their souls. What saves, perhaps the last minute, is the placid home bay,—the little, wind-twisted cottage under the weeping-birch,—the lines of islands in the distance—the sun setting back of the craggs,—the string of little cottages that smile toward you, reflecting the sunset with their uneven panes,—and the handful of little, tarred boats

clearing out their nets of an evening hour.

"Try to forget them, if you will. It comes to this that one day you return even if it is only for a glance at the old loved scene. Then, if you after some days at the old homestead think you have a fill of it and storm out again with oaths on your lips or in your heart, you may lock your rudder and nail your sails to the mast,—verily the grey skerries and the red cottages will smile mockingly back of you as you depart. The water of the sounds, fjords and channels will curl itself into a grin back of you, because you will come back.

"Come poor, wrecked, discouraged, or come proud and happy with foreign gold in your pockets,—you will find a day when you cannot tear yourself loose. Before you realize it you will be back again and belong once more and for good among these skerries.

"By this time you will not wonder

why the old fisherman Korsvik returned from Sumatra, where during the best part of his life he was a well-to-do foreman of a plantation. Nor will you think it queer that Tobias Sundet returned here from America where he was a merchant and notary public. Nor will you ask why Borre Tareviken,—now the poorest of the fishermen, quitted the guilded yacht of the English lord about ten years ago, even though it is reported that he was his lordship's special favorite, that he had been in his service over fifteen years and knew that his old age would be comfortably cared for.

"In the little, grey house on the lee side of the Swartholm lived Andrew Markhus. Now he is dead. He died early last fall. To be sure there was such a storm on the day of his funeral that the four floral tributes and the tarpaulin were blown off the casket and into the sea as his body was rowed over in the face of the storm to the

cemetery across the sound. He lived there many years with his sister. To maintain himself he carried on a sort of deep-sea fishery for lobsters and crabs. As he had the best of boats and tackle he was very successful. Most people remember when he returned home fifteen years ago, and a few there may be who remember his going away as a youth. He went away with pride and self-assurance galore. He had to get out in the world and wanted to get rich. It was known that he won both riches and a good name in distant Brazil. But one day he came back and provided himself with boats and tackle. He became as busy a fisherman as there ever was in these parts. He drove closer bargains than most fishermen had a habit of doing with the buyers. In the course of a little time the rumor of his riches were forgotten and he became known only as " the Swart-holm fisherman."

"One day last fall, when he suspected

that he did not have long to live he made a confidante of his sister.

" 'Things are not a-going right with me,' said he, 'I was to have returned home long ago, Anne Lena. It was meant that I was to pay a short visit to my old home. I should have returned long ago . . . .'

" 'How can that be, my dear Andrew,' said the sister, 'it is now fifteen years since you came back.'

"He lay where he could look over the grey skerries with his old, running eyes.

" 'I let it go from day to day. I can hardly understand it. At first I thought of little else, but could not tear myself loose. Later I forgot about it. I was called Andro Marco and had a house in Bahia. I have people that await me, I have connections . . . .'

"After the funeral, Anne Lena engaged lawyers to look up the matter of her brother's property in Bahia. In due time the tidings came of there be-

ing a rich Mrs. Marco who some years earlier had spent large sums advertising for her husband, Andro Marco from Norway."

In sheltered ledges stand the little, cozy houses of the Sondmore fishermen, looking down cheerfully on the watery ways and the wayfarers. There are school-houses and an occasional white-painted church. Around the church a few acres are laid out for a graveyard which is usually but poorly patronized for reasons of its own. The man of Utgard is wedded to the sea—for the better or the worse. Two-faced and treacherous though it be, it is still his life partner, whom he is unhappy without. In its cool depths it holds his ancestors, as he expects it one day will hold him. Not in the least given to sentimentality on this account, the man

who appears as if sprung from the unpolished rock — reasons in his own practical way that Davy Jones is no worse a nurse than grim Mother Plague and much less particular about shrouds and things of that sort. The ceremony is short and there is nothing black or sinister to impress painfully the eye of surviving relatives and neighbors. Besides, old Davy Jones never sends a bill for funeral expenses to the widow. Some fishermen neighbors find the little fering keel up some day— and that is all.

In the meantime the Sondmorer pursues with grim cheerfulness the herring and the cod, toppling over the waves on his "beam's ends"—or in blank tranquility pulls the oars, as the case might be. In either instance he sits on his thwart and hums some inward Norse melody—perhaps a psalm. He never acts hurriedly. I have observed him in a storm when his boat is swept

form its *med* and in an incredulously short time appears like a mere speck on the horizon,—when the whistling, unsteady wind flaps the sails in his strong grasp;—or when he is far out westward of all skerries on the *Blue Moor* the *Skjella,* or freaky westward wind, threatens to blow him into the great body of the Atlantic;—when his little open boat constructed of thin, tarred pine boards writhes and quivers in the clutches of unfriendly elements and minutes seem like torturing hours and days,—never does he hurry, never acts in confusion. What he attempts to do he does effectively. These bromide qualities he has inherited from the sea.

For the indolent or the weak there is no place in these parts of Utgard. The wants of these people are easily supplied and it is a poor market for fineries in raiment or food. A weak tenure of life has produced greater virtue and indirectly healthier bodies and minds.

Patches of gardens between the rocks display beds of Easter-lilies, blue-gentian, daffodils, violets and roses. Little fields tell of careful nursing by feminine hands, for the men, when not in their boats are busy curing their fish or mending their nets and tackle on the beach or in the spaceous boat houses.

To real dangers an active mind adds fancied pictures full of terror. By the evening firesides fearsome yarns are told and retold with telling modulations and gestures of the Krake, Droug, ghosts and the devil. The Droug appears as an *ignis fatuus,* as told by Jonas Lie—to men doomed to death in storms at sea. It takes on the form of a mocking, close reflection of the soon-to-be disastrous condition of the victim of a catastrophe, his boat and crew. In his phantom boat the Droug sails besides the doomed man in the same clothes and with the same crew. The ghost stories are fraught with the same dread. Told by mothers while waiting

for the return of their husbands from the sea, as the wind howls about the corners of the house and down the chimney and the hearth-fire casts flickering shadows along the walls, the little-ones huddle together closely in their apprehension of evil.

It is at night that the dead that died at sea, on the herring banks, get uneasy in their wet graves and stalk landwards in great numbers,—like the combers one sees at night under the pale moon rolling landwards pursued by a gentle breeze. It appears that their quondam love for home and kin has been alienated by some mysterious agency since death, for, as they dash over the little cottages which were theirs while they lived they howl angrily down the chimneys,—or their bloated, livid faces are seen peering suspiciously in at the little windows. Their wanton shrieks are heard above the wailing of the wind, or they rattle and shake the windows and doors and, when the family is asleep,

flit through the rooms and blow their chilly breaths on the faces of the sleeping.

Thus lives and dies the modern Norman, a rock-ribbed, Vulcan-hearted race and the marrow and bone of his nation. The roar of the waves is his lullaby, his wedding-march and dirge. He possesses the gifts of the Norns to still hear in the *Brenning* or murmuring surges of Utgard an echo of the wild battle-songs of the Einherjars of eld—urging him constantly on. It may be faint and moody as when the ocean is red under the setting sun and the sea-birds hum in chorus on the shore rocks.—or it may be heard as a terrible roar that fills the plateaus and valleys of the hinterland, clear to the capital and the Swedish border.

The men of Sondmore obey this call.

Molde.

Around her little harbor lies Molde the picturesque. From her charming situation on gently rising ground, she looks the impressive panorama of the snow-capped Romsdal alps on the other side of the land-locked fjord—straight in the face.

There is one matter of which the old-fashioned little place is even more proud than of her popularity as a resort for English tourists,—she is the college-town of Bjornson. What are claimed to be his "jack-knife-carved initials" are pointed out to the stranger with no end of pride on the part of her

burghers, as are the once sepulchral class-rooms in the yellow, old Latin Skole, now turned into a tenement house, where the embryo poet received his first lessons in Latin, French and German. English is not thought enough of by Norse educational authorities to be given a place on the curriculum of their colleges, except in the case of a mere practical, short course. However, both Ibsen and Bjornson found it essential to acquire a reading and speaking-knowledge of English later in their careers, the superficiality of which is shown in Ibsen's works in such barbarisms as "Master Cotton" for Mister Cotton, and " werry well", the last in the first edition of Peer Gynt.

As one might easily expect by reason of his magnificent physique and extraordinary talents, the poet made heavy inroads into the hearts of the Molde maidens in his youth.

Facing a corner of the *torvet*, or public mart and steamboat quay, stands

a ramshackle building with the letter "H" carved on its five closed wooden shutters. In its state of decay, yet with sundry signs of indubitable, quondam grandure, it suggests to mind the haughty-poor individual, who has seen better days and yet is not aware of the fact that his presence may give pain to such "friends" as once were proud of his company. The house seems to muse —like Diogenes in the sun—with closed lids, disdaining to look at the more modern buildings round it.

This is the ancient mansion of the H———ks, a family of sea-captains as far back as the oldest Molde citizen can remember having been told about them. In front of the house their stately full-riggers used to swing at anchor of yore when not sailing the high-seas to or from "Spain and India."

It is told softly by the sentimental Moldese that to this house the poet used to come daily for reasons not to be discussed lightly.

In the rooms facing the large orchard and away from the *torvet* lives yet, or until recently, Marie H———k, the "rare and ancient maiden." Tall and slender and still with traces of beauty, she is said to cherish in her voluntary solitude the tenderest memories of the world-poet.

The atmosphere of Molde is especially literary. Rigged out in high hats, English walking coats and with canes, the members of the "*klubben*", the cream of its masculine society and intelligence, may be seen of an afternoon promenading along the shady roads leading in the direction of the charming suburbs, Reknes or Moldegard. They are for the most part fine-looking, high-browed men. They saunter along in groups in the middle of the roadway and in a leisurely manner. It is all so typically Pickwickian.

A proclamation had gone forth from the hand of the *Dux* of the graduating class of the Latin Skole that according to ancient custom, the *Bragir-gilde* or festival in honor of the pagan Norse god of poetry, should be duly observed in Bragir's grove at the top of the Varden mountain, back of the city. One of these curious proclamations came, evidently intentionally on part of the Dux, into my possession.

After a good hour's strenuous climbing along well-trod paths through the pine forest, we arrived at length at the Varden, or Cairn. From here the view is exceptional. Westward some twenty

miles we beheld once more the ocean. To the south lay the grand-scenic Molde-fjord, dotted with pine-covered islands. The tranquil mirror of the water reflected the white peaks and green strands of the landscape beyond. Immediately below nestled the little city in holiday attire, the bay harboring a respectable fleet of small craft with an occasional liner or dismantled hull of condemned large vessel. Over the warehouses of massive proportions that lined the water's edge, hung immovably scores of large national flags. Still nearer appeared the white walls, red roofs and flower gardens of the village residential portion, well warranting the great poet's epithet of "Flowery Borough." It was poetic Molde looking her best.

The celebrations were held in the open, under the pines near the *fjeld hytte* or mountain-cabin. While it was free for all Academicians, a committee looked to that only such were

present. Undesirables were escorted a suitable distance down the mountain side under guard. The gilde proper was celebrated with oratory, song and revival of the lost art of improvisation. There was display of keen analytical mentality; spontaneous outbursts of bold fancy and intricately woven mental fabrics. Later were brought out from the recesses of the cabin, smoking bowls of punch and placed on improvised tables. Around these the students gathered with some of the more liberal professors, glass in hand. From a celebration to the deity of Poetry, the scene was changed to one Bacchanalian. On a bowlder at the centre of the group of tables stood the Magister Bibendi, or drinking-master. There were no chairs. Everybody was enthusiastic and many of the students quite noisy. *Skaals* were proposed and drunk to each of the professors present, who thereby braved the criticism of the plebs.

As the gilde proceeded, students were seen to stray around the rocks arm in arm, in pairs or in groups as they became united for some literary or political cause. They were mostly manly fellows with clean-cut faces, dressed in the height of fashion. A small quota of them talked the broad dialect of Aasen and Vinje. These had the prominent cheek-bones indicating peasant stock, and appeared quieter. Only in intellect were they fully equal with the rest. There were those who would orate ad infinitum with great zest and much earnestness on political issues of the realm, their friends and party-fellows shouting continuously "hear, hear." But there were few, if any, given to listening.

Late in the celebrations one of the students ascended the speaker's rock and proposed a *skaal* "to the King and the Fatherland." This was evidently the signal for the republicans to wake up. They gathered as swiftly as possi-

ble in their condition from all parts of the grove and pushing forward to the rostrum vociferated sufficiently to drown the words of the speaker. A song was sung by the republicans which had a thousand verses to the tune of "God save the king." But the words were as follows:

"This is the very first verse,
Next comes the second verse,
All join and sing:—
Gummi Arabicum, Gummi Elasticum,
Gummi Arabicum and Elasticum.

That was the very first verse,
This is the second verse,
All join and sing:—
Gummi Arabicum, etc.

Historic Helgoe.

Where the Romsdal fjord expands and divides in its three branches—lies Helgoe island, sacred in memory.

The dashing little boats of the *More Dampskibsselskab* plying on the Long-Fjord route will land you in its neighborhood after about an hour's journey out of Molde. This gives you the advantage of a detailed perspective at close range of the Romsdal alps to the South, that sombre line of blue-coated white-capped sentinels guarding the gate of this Northern paradise. The eye wanders in pleasant bewilderment between the towering stretches of rock

high up, the ominous pine forest immediately below and the picturesque, haying bonders and their alluring villa-farms nestling close to the water's edge.

To the Romsdal bonder—for reasons to be described—Helgoe is not so much an island as it is an institution. Nor, is it an institution as institutions go, but one of the kind that stands close to his heart yet is forever passing and hence has just begun to live on as a saga. And the Norse heart is fond of sagas.

At Molde I was joined by my friend Mr. Dunwood, who after and in consequence of an automobile-accident near Christiania had spent some enforced weeks at a hospital there, and had journeyed overland by way of the Gudbrandsdal valley. We were drifting about like flotsam of the sea in the neighborhood of Molde, leading a life of joyous vegetation, when our first attention was called to Helgoe by some

fishermen my friend sketched. Evidently there had been some strange happenings at Helgoe, of some sort. Only the rumors were fractional, gossamery and uttered with an air of mysticism. There was some mention of "The old man at Helgoe." Our solicitations for further light on the matter were met with evasion, or on the part of the wiser heads were treated as an absurdity. Yet, this is how we first learned of Helgoe.

But, as to Helgoe, there was evidently a lack of substantial information on the part of these bonders, or for some reason they were adverse to discussing it with strangers.

Therefore, rousing ourselves, we set out to investigate conditions at Helgoe for ourselves with appetites whetted for discovery and romance. And that is how we came to spend many happy days at Helgoe.

How lavish nature is in certain parts of Utgard, as if to make up for

its stinginess in others. Yet, the unstinted prodigality of delights of the eye is coupled with a jealous meanness in the matter of affording sustenance of physical life.

And now that I am about to relate our experience at Helgoe, necessitating the lifting of a fold of the veil of centuries that rests over the place, I fear I lay myself liable to the ancient Viking charge of being a "Varg in Veum", that is, a "wolf in the temple." But, as it is that fear of any kind does not thrive well in Norse air, unless it be the Fear of the Lord, I shall continue my account. The incidences shall be recorded as they occurred, while trying to conserve their atmosphere without which they would lack some of their *raison d'etre*. I shall likewise hand them over unwrapped of their adnascent psychic integuments, ridiculous, no doubt, as such things seem to most of us. Such matters follow their own laws, which for the most part per-

haps we do not understand, as in the old German legend of the Elf-king:—

"Mein sohn, wie birgst du so bang dein
gesicht?"
"Siest, vater, du den Erlkoenig nicht?"

To be exact—as is the custom in matters where one expects not to be taken seriously—we found Helgoe less than a marine league from the fast-land or continent. That is on the South. In other directions the distance is greater, yet the mountains rise to such a height that the surrounding coast looks quite near. Immense Cyclopian temples, they rise in places abruptly from out of the water and hem in the valley, giving the fjord the appearance of an inland lake.

On a large map, Helgoe appears dumb-bell-shaped: the grip representing

low-lying cultivated land and the two knobs pine-clad knolls.

In a central position on the cultivated land stands the impressive old church—dating from the twelfth century—with its white-plastered walls and its single black tower. A little to the North of it, a complexity of mouldering yellow, white or red buildings, still with evidences of some pretentiousness—represents the ancient parsonage proper. Clustering about these a chaos of smaller buildings for various intents and purposes, but mostly in the same state of decay, gives the whole the appearance of a weird hamlet. The harmoniously austere tone of architecture and the evident avoidance of exterior embellishment is strictly in keeping with the faith and life of the Utgard bonders. Outward expression of joy or sorrow, architecturally or otherwise, including sorrowing at funerals by the bereft,—is not seen as a rule in rural districts in Norway.

In the direction of the bays that almost bisect the island,—to the west stretches a luxurious garden, replete with flowering shrubs and shade trees, while to the east lies the extensive ancient cemetery. Around this latter, crumbling, moss-grown boulders form a defective fence. Wide, sanded driveways connect the ancient pile with the bays, cutting through the cemetery, where quaint white, wooden arches—without gates—are the boldest attempt at decorative art on the island. In the bays, wide sandy beaches are flanked with a number of white, red or yellow boathouses, representing an equal number of the more prosperous bonder gards.

Over the whole—what impresses one most at Helgoe—stately, towering ash-trees and lindens, standing in close, intersecting avenues, shed a sweet, soothing twilight which enhances the fascinating weirdness. Beyond the

graveyard with its forest of bristling, grey, wooden crosses, are waving meadows and rye-fields reaching close down to the white sands of the beach and up the gently slanting rise to where they are skirted by the dark pines.

The history of Helgoe, as recorded by Rev. Tubring and found in the parish library, discloses little particularly unusual.

Up to the time Olaf christianized the realm with fire and sword in the 11th century, it had been a *hov,* sacred to the Valhalla deities. It goes on to explain that "due to the inherent tenacity of the populace in matters of faith" it likely was some time after Olaf's death in 1030 that the bonders of Romsdal gave up the sign of Thor's hammer for that of the cross. In the next century it was the site of a town of considerable commercial and strategic importance, maintaining in

all five churches besides the present one, the Fylkis-church.

Huge, wrought iron ciphers high up on the west wall of the church indicate the year 1203. It is thought that this marks not its erection, but its restauration.

When and through what calamity the ancient city of Helgoe disappeared history does not tell us. We are left to surmise that the Bubonic plague which harried the land in the fourteenth century bears a causative relation thereto.

In the Saga of Magnus Erlingson, as told by immortal Snorre, we read of the battle of Helgoe in the year 1162 between King Hakon and the pretender Erling the Skakke. To us this is of interest only as showing the odd ways of these Norsemen engaged in internecine wars. The battle would be divided into acts and scenes like the classical drama. They began by chopping away lustily at one another. If

somebody shouted "time" they would then sit down and chat together in a friendly manner, remarking on the weather and perhaps treat one-another to horns of mead until they were again ordered to resume battle. Those were the days it was fashionable for young Vikings to "sponge" on Southern rulers, especially the Emperor at Micklagard (Constantinople), receiving concessions in permission to plunder sections of Mediteranean coast. Both the Russian and Greek emperors were considered easy in the estimation of the 11th and 12th century Vikings, whose confessed friendship kept the bloody hordes of Blaakomen, Bulgars, Pecinei, and Valachians from overrunning eastern countries. At these imperial courts, Norsemen rested up to afterwards meet other Norsemen at home or abroad in bloody fray, that was when real valor was put to the test: when Norse met Norse.

Snorre's account of the Battle of Helgoe is as follows:—

"Then the battle-blast was sounded for all (of Haakon's) men to fare to their ships. It was meal-time. All the men (left their play-ground and) ran to the ships; each to the one that was nearest to him so that the ships thereby were manned unevenly. Some raising the masts, while others pulled oars, the ships were headed north-east to Helgoe, where they expected succor from the townspeople. Thereupon they saw the sails of Erling's vessels (coming from Bergen), and each fleet soon had a chance to have a good look at the other. Eindride Unge had the ship that was called the Draglaun, a great 'longshippe-busse,' which had few people, since they that belonged on it had run aboard other ships. Hence it was the rearmost of Haakon's ships. When Eindride came off the island Sekken, Erling's ship, the 'Bokesuden', hove in sight. This Erling him-

self steered, and soon these two ships, 'hung together.' But King Haakon had almost reached Helgoe, when he heard the blast of the lur-trumpet. The ships that now were nearest and wished to help Eindride turned about and both fleets closed up for battle as best they could. Many sails were dropped across the ships but no vessel was hooked as they lay to, side-by-side. This battle did not last long ere the positions were changed. On Haakon's ships some fell and others jumped overboard. The king wrapped himself in a grey tunic and jumped over on another ship, but when he had been there a short time he found himself surrounded by enemies instead of friends. Then he entered his own ship from the prow of which he asked for *grid*—(peace). But the fighting-men-in-the-prows—(stavnboere)—of the enemy's ships took him among them and gave him *grid*.

"Many men fell in this battle and

chiefly on Haakon's side. After this skirmish there was a rest. Erling learned that his enemy was there on his ship and that the fighting-men-in-the-prow intended to protect him. Erling then sent a man (forward) to ask of his men that they care for Haakon, lest he may fare away, promising not to object to his being granted *'grid'*, if he should wish it. The men in the prow praised Erling for these words.

"After this (friendly parley), Erling caused the war-trumpet to be sounded loudly for the continuation of the battle,—to clear the ships there was any doubt about. Then all men gave the battle-cry, each side egging the other on and finally closed up for battle with ribald shouts and taunts. In this battle Haakon received his bane. But when Haakon's men became aware of his fall, they rushed forward, cast away their shields and wielded the battle-ax with both hands in Berserk fashion. This rush soon reacted un-

propitiously, as Erling's men thereby knew where to aim their sharpest blows. Many of Haakon's men fell, because fighting men were very numerous (on the other side), and because his men did not shield themselves. None of Haakon's men were given permission to live, except such as were protected and paid for by Erling's chieftains. The rest were hewn down. Some ships escaped into (inner) Romsdal where also Haakon's body was taken and earthed."

Later Haakon's body was removed to the great cathedral at Drontheim and installed in a massive stone-wall.

Since those dark and bloody days, it is believed the hardy men of Romsdal ever councilled together in times of war or pestilence, and otherwise worshipped according to the simple tennets of an honest faith—at Helgoe.

It is within the memory of the present generation that the government ordered the Helgoe church and parsonage permanently vacated, more modern structures to take their places having been erected on the fast-land. One readily surmises this was done in order to prevent the numerous casualties on the fjord mass-days. The *skjella,* or down-mountain wind is treacherous and fierce, changing the smooth surface of the fjord to an undulating sheet of foam in an incredulously short time. Lately the "land-roads" have been improved, too, so that it is no longer the fjord that is the

handiest high-way from gard to gard.

Save for the presence of the government-paid custodian and his little family, Helgoe parsonage was consequently deserted at the time of our visit. To help him garner the heavy crops of barley, rye and oats a dozen or more husmen—landholders by copy under the new parsonage—were for the time lodged in the baarstu or servants' hall.

As is customary in Norway, outside the popular tourist centres—and whoever eschews these is wise—we were received with the utmost cordiality on the part of the custodian, Mr. Dybdal, and his little family. It was impossible that their heartiness could be anything but sincere. Norwegians are a failure at pretentions. One can read their feelings; it is external like in children. When Hans says he wants nothing for rowing you in his *ferring* across the fjord, by which he lets his hay wait in the field with a chance of its being spoiled by the rain,—even if he in-

sists—it is plain from his manner that he would be painfully disappointed unless he receives a reasonable reimbursement for his time and sinew. But the refusal of reward is very odd to an American. It is pleasant to most people to be treated like superior beings, and Hans gets always more than he would otherwise receive for his services, both parties to the deal being happier in conseqence.

While along the Mediteranean hungry natives dive for pennies thrown by tourists into the sea, these rural Northerners have a disregard for lucre that is both rediculous and touching. Thus, if the weather is threatening and our man Hans does not like to "tempt his maker" by setting out from shore, —there is not enough money in the Bank of Norway to buy his services. It is a different matter if under the same circumstances there is a moral point involved,—if he brings medical or spiritual aid to those in need of

same or reunite the anxious and parted, then the weather is never too rough to keep Hans from launching his skiff.

This trait he may have inherited from his pagan ancestors who believed that dying fighting—dying doing something worth while—was the swiftest, surest and, in fact, only way to blessed Valhalla, while such as died inactively, in bed, went to the Niflheim of Regrets.

"We island-dwellers are always glad to see people," said Mr. Dybdal, "and especially Americans, they are such rare birds; except returning emigrants, of course, of which we have many."

As we soon learned, Mr. Dybdal was something of an American himself, having spent a year or more at the agricultural colleges of some western state universities. He holds the degree and title of "agronom" and is looked upon by the peasants to be a wise and much-travelled man.

As I strolled through the garden, that ideal place for inducing thoughts

of the has-been,—lounging under the foliage that proved for the most part impervious to the rays of the hot sun—his bushy head would be visible, projecting over the back of a Turkish rocker by the library window. If the sashes happened to be flung out door-fashion—as custom is in Norway on very hot days—it could not escape one's ear that the guardian of the king's Helgoe was asleep. Except when engaged at the throne-end of the dining table, where he invariably appeared at his best, I seldom remember having seen Mr. Dybdal except, as described. The awe in which he appeared to be held by the peasants rendered him immune to the faintest attempt at criticism. It was said that in his regime "neither ill-humor nor any other bad luck" ventured across the sound to Helgoe.

To have the matter made clear to me one day at breakfast I asked whether the husmen were faithful employees.

"I do not follow the American idea in this matter, it would not do here," explained Mr. Dybdal. "The fact is," he added, "it would be too expensive, even if the men would allow of the innovation."

"Allow it!" echoed my companion, shocked at the idea that employees be given a voice in the matter of their supervision.

"Well, yes, allow it," repeated the custodian. "These men do not want to be spied on and bossed. Here every man is considered faithful and capable until he has shown himself lacking in these virtues. When they are tired they rest. They may go fishing if they choose. That is no loss to anybody. You will see none of these men overworked and underfed. In America,—a corporation must bear the heavy expense of a system of overseers, superintendents, foremen and spies to get anything done. I sometimes think this system has a bearing on the recurrent

hard times or financial crises, as the cost of operating even a small manufacturing plant thereby is greatly increased. It is, I think, an outgrowth of your political system of spoils."

"Is it not rather a survival of the ante bellum methods of handling negro slaves?" suggested Dunny.

"Whatever it is, it is condemnable, because it is not only poor economy but also poor humanity," resumed Mr. Dybdal. "The peasant of this country was never a serf or a bond-man, as the same class invariably has been once in all other countries. In America you tax the laborer for the expenses connected with having somebody wield the whip over his head while at work. You could not do it with us. Therefore are our emigrants attracted not so much to the Eastern cities of America as they are to the Western prairies, because on the plains they are their own masters. There is none to wield the knout, as in the city factory.

"Most of the degenerates that infect the big cities of America, are they not descendants of the serfs of southern or central Europe? While the Scandinavians are turning the Western American wilderness into a paradise, these people are turning the Eastern cities into the worst immaginable sort of a wilderness. The Norseman never feared the whip. It is the Norse bonder whose voice is heard defending the liberties and free institutions of this country in the Storting. It was he that caused the abolishment of nobility in the realm back in 1821. Where have we another class of farmers like ours?"

"Were it not they, too, that shouted against their kings and pitched them into soft bogs of eld?" was asked.

"Yes, and to-day—if the kings do not suit—fire them and hire others to do the king-stunt."

"In all countries but Norway," resumed the custodian, "there are man-

sions and castles that by comparison make the farmer's modest dwelling seem insignificant and lowly. We have in Norway no class of aristocratic loafers that look down upon the farmer and produce an unhealthy, pathogenic feeling of inferiority and dependence in his heart. Like the hard Norwegian pine, he has grown free from any overshadowing element. We have therefore no poorhouses, as a rule, and no need of public charity except in cases due to accident.

During our first days at Helgoe, we tried in vain to find a reason for linking Mr. Dybdal to the rumors that primarily attracted us to the island. On the other hand, he appeared to be the very acme of whole-souled good-nature, a man of the most robust common sense. He seemed possessed of information of a vast range. Nor did he sway with the current of fleeting popular opinion, but sustained a good balance by well-grounded personal sentiments.

"You have many great men in Norway considering the population of the country," was the comment of Mr.

Dunny one day, when the conversation showed a tendency to lag. "In the field of literature, in explorations and sciences, Norwegians cover far more ground than is their percentage by population."

"Yes, and in some respects appreciative foreigners resemble the whales along our coast," replied the redoubtable custodian.

"In what way?" was asked.

"Because *they blow about Norway.* We have some men who have won fame in various fields, that is true, however. Our merchant marine, you have been told by people who like to boast, ranks above those of most of the great powers of the world in both tonnage and initiative. But, if you ask us why it is that we have won fame in the world of letters, in explorations and the arts, it would no doubt be found that it is mainly due to our custom of having men teach men. Can you imagine an Ibsen, a Bjornson, a Nansen, an

Amundsen, etc., to have been taught up to young manhood by a schoolmadam? Impossible. If you visit our schools, which you ought to do, you will find a man — likely an old man — behind the cathedra. These old fellows follow their own individual systems of teaching. Some have no system at all, and these last are possibly the most successful in waking the youth,— as they are, what you may call too great for any system. Most of these teachers are philosophers in their way; some are writers and some are poets, but nearly all are self-thinkers. I do not know if you would approve of their teaching, as they do not teach by the clock. Their chief merit is in inspiring the youth with the ambition that leads to honest, patient work, abstinence, self-reliance and independence. It is not so much the quantity of knowledge crammed down, as it is learning to look on the *literary value—not the*

money value—of life that is the chief objective point.

"As with the peasants so with the teachers, in the matter of supervision. There are no superintendents.

"A teacher is an autocrat—put upon his honor. He is virtually responsible to no superiors, although the parish prest, by prearranged appointment, attends or conducts the exercises in the presence of the parents once a year. Our schoolmaster is hired for life—on good behavior—not from year to year, as in America."

"What you say, Mr. Dybdal, is very interesting, but I doubt if this plan would be practicable in the United States," said Dunny.

"No, there you are right," insisted the custodian warmly. "You would have the thousands of schoolma'ms raise Cain, if you tried to oust them from their inherited station in life. They would get their friends, relations, cousins and aunts to appeal to the law-

making bodies, composed to a certain extent of mush-heads, and soon there would be a string of laws making it impossible for a male to teach in the various states. The praise of the ma'am would be sung in every paper, the greatness of your admirable nation would be attributed to her efforts."

"I shall never forget," said the custodian, "one time I visited a common school in Iowa. I had about used up my government stipend on which I travelled and was about to return home when I recollected my former intention of seeing the institution of which I had heard so much, 'the little red schoolhouse' in action. I found a very pleasant little woman of about seventeen years presiding over an attendance of about a score of pupils of different ages. I remained for an hour or more and found that the teaching was according to a dull, hum-drum sort of system, with no attempt at explaining the why or wherefore, the good of it,

the *motif*. This could not be expected of so young a girl, who did perhaps well. I have no criticism to make of the teaching, only that it seemed to concern alltogether the head. The heart, as I understood it, was left to develop any old way. We talk about character. What is it but heart?"

"The American child is handicapped with a language, the spelling and special study of which are estimated as equal to a loss of two years at school—compared with countries having phonetically spelled languages," said Dunny, "hence the necessity of a great amount of memory work. In your country, for instance, there is no necessity of teaching spelling. The language spells by sound. Think of the saving to parents, state and municipality!"

"I had occasion to observe before I left that day a matter that impressed me very much as a sort of a key to the situation," continued the custodian, "that the boys were handy with the

crochet-needle and the knitting-pins during the recesses. The larger boys instead of going out to play with the other children would remain in the schoolroom and wait on the teacher and it was but natural that they acquired these little feminine occupations. I am not certain whether they learned this during the school hours or otherwise for when I asked the teacher if this sort of 'manual training' was a part of the regular curriculum, she blushed and said, 'Course not'. How could one expect a seventeen year old girl, with a modicum of elementary education to develop character—to sow the seed of a fuller, completer manhood and womanhood—but especially manhood— in these young souls? I see no good reason why such girls should not be employed in teaching kindergarten subjects to first year pupils, but to larger children they are a hindrance. What the Norse schools pay particular attention to is the imagina-

tion and sense of beauty of the child. If this is not trained carefully it turns into pathologic ruts resulting in destruction mentally, morally and physically in after years.

"If America spent more for male instructors of boys in the common schools, she would thereby save on her departments of justice and charity and indirectly on the army and navy, the efficiency of which being thereby increased," persisted the sage of Helgoe.

"Perhaps you are right," said Dunny, "but why not also on hospitals. In New York city, for instance, we are always busy building hospitals. We have them as large as small cities, —all denominations and nationalities have their own, but the cry is ever for more. It seems to me that if we ever get enough of them, there will be very few people living outside of them."

Gradually the rumors of the Romsdal bonders drifted to the background of our consciousness, yet we never regretted the circumstance that brought us to Helgoe.

For the purpose of acquiring the Norse language—to read Ibsen in the original — Dunny, when not busy sketching in some part of the Romsdal valley, had put himself under the tutorship of Miss Svava, the beautiful and accomplished young daughter of our host. A student in a ladies' seminary in Denmark, she was spending her vacation at home. It was said that the young lady of many exotic graces

was equally anxious to take advantage of our stay to perfect herself in colloquial English. Foreseeing much loneliness for myself, through this arrangement and fearing the possibility of an "entangling foreign alliance" on the part of my friend, such as warned against by an early American statesman,—I tried to prevent this coalition on the part of a majority of the polite society of Helgoe. Therefore, one day after breakfast I suggested a change in the professorship.

"There is the old lady Ogot," said I to Dunny, "who served under the old parson and who is just dying for somebody to talk to. It seems to me that you two would profit about equally, each by the other's society, one discoursing and the other listening. Why not pool issue with her? Besides, it is not the best Norse that is taught in ladies' seminaries in Denmark."

Dunny, who had been brought up in

the neighborhood of Fifth avenue, had by early necessity acquired a habit of side-stepping and circumspection.

"Your suggestion is excellent, brother," said he, "and I shall keep it in mind some day when I come to study —old-Norsk."

The mutual teacher and scholar did not sit down to their linguistic considerations but romped over the fields and rocks, a new but not perhaps wholly condemnable method. With considerable loneliness thrust upon me, I employed my time in studying the history and folk-lore of Utgard,—only occasionally mixing with the fairly intelligent yet superstitious peasants. When it chanced that I was occupied on the highest point of the island, where some men from the university had made excavations, — studying the archaic topography with the help of a work by one of these scientists, loaned me by the custodian, — it almost invariably chanced that I would hear Professor

Svava's hearty, girlish laughter from some part of the island.

One morning as they prepared to stroll for another lesson, the custodian's fru, a most refined and interesting lady of quiet manners, asked Dunny if he found the study of Norwegian very hard.

"Quite so, my dear fru," came the oracle,"—but chiefly to my shoes, which are assuming the color of your shore-rocks."

Some days as I sat reading in the garden, it would chance that the peace of the island was disturbed by the custodian's blind dog, Karo, getting up on his hind feet in the kitchen and with his front paws in a window, emit long, hoarse howls in the direction of the cemetery and the east bay. At this the husmen would stop at their work, shake their heads and turn the ever-present quid to the other side,— after a moment resuming their task in the same easy way without saying a word. After some time, a cluster of boats would glide noiselessly into the bay and a number of bonders in home-

spun disembark in front of the boat-houses. After a while they would form a line and carrying a plain black casket among them proceed to the church. The bells would chime and after the services, the interment take place—by special dispensation—in the ancient cemetery. A drawling, monotonous hymn would be sung,—that same inward, subjective psalm melody peculiar to Norse bonders.

The parson who had come over in his naptha launch to officiate before the grave reads solemnly from his book as he scatters the first few shovelsful of loose earth over the casket—ending with the words "Dust to dust, and what is bound on Earth shall be bound in Heaven."

It is another volume completed with incessant care and with but little worldly reward,—now duly "bound" and entered in the library of the Lord to await the great cataloguer.

"If any says Nirvana is to cease,
Say unto such they lie."

But the bonders do not mourn long for the grave-ale is waiting at the home of the bereaved and it is not to the liking of the family to have the "helferd" be anything but as great an event as possible.

Perhaps at midnight, i. e. if the distance is not too great, these people are as merry as larks over their ale-bowls and punch-glasses and at sunrise they may be as boisterous as a Dutch picknick.

However, of late, this custom has been changed somewhat due to the influence of temperance societies.

As I came to know the bonders better, I became greatly attached to them by reason of their droll yarns, quaint in form and rife in mysticism. Their old shells lit up as they spoke, showing that the kernel of childhood enthusiasm was by no means dead within.

They were accounts of bravery on the fjord or the high-mountains, or stories of the Hulder, Trolls or ghosts, just like in Sondmore, but never of love. Some were tedious repetitions of published stories, with changed scene and atmosphere. As a class they represented the flotsam of the deep sea of bonder fancy, in keeping with their faith and tradition.

One evening I lingered on the baar-

stu lawn, as the husmen chatted together after their day's work. I passed around a juicy plug of American tobacco to their delight and asked Halvard to tell me something about the Helgoe parsons.

Halvard looked puzzled at my blunt request, and seemed at first unwilling to talk. Later in the evening, evidently anxious to please he volunteered the following sample of a Romsdal bonder's tales:

"In my father's younger days, there was a parson on this island that was called Canute. The parish was at that time not what it is to-day. Hr. Canute found the people full of the Evil-One and he set about with all his might and ingenuity to improve things. He moved a great deal among the people and called on them when they least expected him, as at their rough dances their wedding-gildes and their Sunday evening carrousals. Yet his manners were not such as to cause offense, after

they came to know him better and the first surprise was over. His presence helped to dampen the worst element and after the first year or so it was unnecessary for Hr. Canute to have to resort to the strength of his hard fists to command respect.

"Then the report came noised about that the Evil-One had taken up his abode in the Helgoe church, where on dark nights he bellowed like an ox and carried on in an awful fashion. The female servants were too frightened to venture out of the baarstu to attend to the cattle except when well escorted by the men. The fall nights, if you have never seen them in these parts, I wish to say, are extremely dark. Later the panic seized even the cattle. Thus to the bellowing from the church was added the bellowing of upward a hundred frightened cattle, so that the roar was terrifying to the strongest nerve.

"Hr. Canute waited till the whole

parish was paralyzed with fear before he would do anything. You know the Lord has given the prests power to bind Satan and his black angels. I kind-of half reckon the whole trouble was inaugurated to warn a certain bad element in the parish, although, they say it was a piece of revenge on the part of Mr. Satanas, for Hr. Canute's activity against him.

"Beseeched by the panicky people of the parish, Hr. Canute at last decided to act. On a particular night he had three of his stoutest male servants accompany him to church. Arriving there, he opened the door and entered, ordering his men to lock the door from the outside, when they were to go home, but be back and lock him out at sun-rise. That night began with the usual bellowing but it ended for good before sun-rise, never to re-occur at Helgoe. As usual, Hr. Satanas was outwitted so that he never more assumed the form of an ox

in this parish. According to orders, before the first rays of the morning's sun gilded the eastern windows of the church, the servants were there and opened the big doors for Hr. Canute to leave the church. As the doors were flung open, there stood Hr. Canute, dripping with perspiration and steaming like a horse that has been driven hard in chilly weather. He was almost unrecognizable and his clothes were in tatters. But what happened in the church that night, God only knows. Hr. Canute would not tell."

Halvard had ceased talking in his half-saga, half-clerical style. I observed that it was late and that most of the men had already retired to the baarstu-sal for the night. A cloud passed over the island, producing deep twilight. While yet the story was discussed by two or three of the younger men and myself, somebody's presence was noted in the carpenter shop, a good stone's throw away, and

plainly in sight, I observed on the faces of the men that they were startled, but, then as at other times, I found it to serve my purpose best never to appear to be wiser than they and said nothing. A board was sawed off with strong, regular, rhytmic strokes, as with great deliberation, like a strong, trained carpenter would do. The rise in the pitch indicated that the sawyer was reaching the completion of his task. A few shorter, lighter strokes and the end of the board dropped with a bang on the floor. There was a pause. Then a nail was driven in with the same strong, regular, rhytmic strokes. The nail was heard to sink deeper into the wood with each stroke until at last the hammer was heard to bang against the wood. I felt chilly, but was determined to hold the peasants responsible for attempting to presume on my credulity. I tried to appear indifferent and made some common-

place remark, as we dispersed. "Old Harry is out early to-night", said one of the young men mockingly, which remark was received disapprovingly by the others.

I walked to my favorite musing place on flag-pole hill, from which vantage point I enjoyed a good view of the island, the narrowing vistas of the fjord and the mountains.

Below me the fjord's gentle breathing sent faint undulations romping over the white shingle, combing the dead sea-weeds into a curved line. In places the shore-line would be formed by rocks embraced by knarled roots of pines, all partly covered with a layer of cones. The roots seemed to search for water in the cracks of the rock, to find it at length in the edge of the fjord. Above the high-water mark the wrack hung dry and untouched by the waves. At this debris, an occasional wavelet, bolder than its fellows, pointing a mocking, daring finger of doubt and inquiry.

— — — — — — — — —

Out on the fjord young bonders were heard preparing for the night's catch by hammering in place on the gunnel the *vabein* or pulleys for hauling in their long, weighted, deep-sea lines. A few prefer to try their luck netting. After clearing out their nets, these have nothing to do but sit story-telling throughout the night, or they may sleep away the short hours in the bottom of their boats, which are tied to the nets that drift with the currents of water at any desired depth. Their conversations were heard floating over the water from distant parts with surprising distinctness— —

— — — — — — — — — —

Over the hills and leas lay the luxury of a mature Northern summer. To the south, the mountans reflected the splendor of the near-midnight sun

— — — — — — — — — —

The glory and power were overwhelming. The flowering moss on the high-fells present all colors but black,

yet for the most part, bronze, maroon, violet and pink. The freshness and brilliancy of details lit up by the sunlight appear through the medium of boreal ozone—very striking— — —
— — — — — — — — — —

A delicate, redish-blue haze settles over the silvery fjord, whereby the double lines of shore and reflection meeting in distant parts of the Longfjord are slightly obscured. The gentle murmer of the cascades of the Vick river produces soporific effects like monotonous cadences of some old time lullaby — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — —

"Here spring the healing streams—
quenching all thirst;
Here bloom the flowers that carpet
all one's way with joy;
Here throng the sweetest, swiftest
hours"— — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — —

The sublimity intoxicates like the fabled milk of Woden's goats at Val-

halla. It was an Englishman came to Ormeim near by, and who entered on a Jeremiade because of the insufficiency of adjectives to adequately qualify the charms of Romsdal— — — — — —

— — — — — — — — —

Etched into the green of the forest and the meadows stand the white or red spacious, log-constructed bonders' houses. Back of it all, above the forest and at a height of up to seven thousand feet, are arrayed tapering pinnacles, glowing in yellow, white and crimson

— — — — — — — — —

Behold the saffron sunlight lingering in the peaks,
As loth to say goodnight it hesitates, is captured—,
The dreamy Utgard bonders gleaming in their vicks—
And e'en the broad-winged seagulls seem enraptured.
Behold how distant Longfjord adumbrates and reeks—

How fierce the Ox looks in his crimson colors;—
The Horn, illumined as from inside, seeks
To heights not ventured by his alpine followers— — — — — —
— — — — — — — — —

The change of the sky from blue to orange and purple indicates the beginning of another day. The constant trance changes one. Mountain dwellers ever differed from inhabitants of the plains— — — — — —

The mind seeks to project itself into the marvelous scene—to float on the wings of the gulls that sail gracefully and noiselessly, on steady, proudly spread wings; and to stalk on the dizzy heights. An odor of pine, juniper or newly mowed hay add to the unusual mental effect— — — — —
— — — — — — — — —

From across the Bondervick, Svava's laughter breaks the stillness. Helgoe is indeed an island of many

shrines. One gets used to seeing people turn night into day in these parts, —a commendable thing to do under the circumstances. On a distant point she approaches the parsonage grounds — — — — — — — — —

A moment later Dunny's head is seen over the rocks beyond. She steps down to the water's edge, finds a small, flat stone and makes it skim— deftly and wantonly—over the water. — — — — — — — — —

After a long line of rapid contacts with the shiny surface of the bay,— the last closer together and curved plume-shape,—the stone at last disappears from view— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

Dunny reaches in the meanwhile to where Svava stands, tries the stone-trick, but fails. For a moment she waits to instruct him, then with a swiftness born of young life and Norse air, she leaps over the next berg homeward, while he starts climb-

ing after, now and then on all fours. They are finally lost to view along the path under the birch copse near the boat-houses— — — —

— — — — — — — — — —

Rounding the point where a moment before I saw Svava and Dunny, a large rowboat appeared, leaving as it proceeded a long trenchant wake behind it to under the shadows of the pines. It was a pleasure party. There was merry laughter and the twang of mandolins and banjos onboard— — —

— — — — — — — — — —

Snatches of songs floated softly over the water. I knew the refrain of one:

"The bonders are sleeping now
while we
Sail on pearl-fishery—."

— — — — — — — — — —

Half way in the bay, the party seemed seized with reverence. The oars ceased to stir the water. Voices rose tremulously into the song "Helgoe" composed by a school master

in a nearby district. The author was elected to the Storting, where he served his constituents faithfully up to his death.

Dear, old Helgoe isle,
How sweet o'er the waters you constantly smile;
Oh, worshipers' ancient dedicated ground,
Oh, meet-place of bonders from island and sound,
Oh, spot where so many a tear has been shed,
And prayer been said— — — —
— — — — — — — — —

The oars were again dipped in the water, and the boat glided out the bay.

As the skiff swung around, I beheld an American flag trailing at its stern. Evidently the party included some returned, visiting, bonder emigrants, the kind one meets with at every turn of the road.

However, it is good to see abroad

the flag that stands for substantiation of the principle of brotherhood of man and justice for all. There are few national emblems of which the same may be said. The English are proud of their Union Jack, yet millions of innocent people in India, and all other parts of the world have contributed their heart's blood to its glaring red. It is insatiable. Wherever lust of land or lucre draws it, there is hell. And the world stands by and nods approval.

Never did the Stars and Stripes seem so beautiful and dear as that night on flag-staff hill at Helgoe, and on the impulse of the moment I stood up and cheered the nocturnal visitors and the flag, and wafted my hat. The salute was returned with the fluttering of hats and handkerchiefs.

This is the Romsdal of the poet Bjornson, for here he grew to young manhood. From my vantage point, I could see the tops of the hills surrounding Nesset parish, where his father held the modest position of parson, at the end of the the Long-fjord. This is the sublime and stimulating essence of all his dichtung. It is due to him that the Norse of to-day are a singing people. On the high-fells, in their fishing boats, or in their struggle for life at home, every man, woman or child old enough to talk—sings. There is a song by him for every vocation, every trial, every mood, age

or season which strengthens and upholds. And yet this noblest Utgard-chieftain of them all loved war, not in itself but as a means to an end. For over fifty years he was the mighty pivot on which the nation's life and destiny revolved. He carried his people with him into every exalted viewpoint, egged them on, disrupted, united, knouted and loved them. He was the rock of despair of the evil-minded, and a sufficiently big piece of Norway alone to stand against all the others, if needed. His sympathies, too big for his own nation, are found, invariably on the side of higher righteousness and justice, from the iniquitous Danish—German war to the scandalous Dreyfuss affair, his shaggy mane waving at the head of the on-marching columns of moral victors.

Of the many European writers that have visited America, none understood us as well, or at least wrote as ripely and appreciatingly about us

as did Bjornson. It is especially A-merian womanhood he flatters in his later works.

As in the golden age of Athens, so the literary tastes and requirements of the Norse are of such high standard that in order to succeed as a writer at present, a Norwegian must be no ordinary master of the art. The galaxy of writers, headed by Hamsun, Garborg, Sivle and Aanrud, that cluster about the two main great luminaries, Ibsen and Bjornson—tho in themselves sufficiently meritorious to head the list of literary workers in most countries, are scarcely paid any attention to at home.

What perhaps speaks most highly of the character of the Norse to-day is the fact that though they themselves as a people are devoutly orthodox, they never let this fact blind them in the matter of obtaining the greatest good from the works of such as have been known as "other-

wise-thinking'' in the matter of religious belief. This is so much more remarkable when we consider that only a generation ago, the narrowness of mind and religious intolerance was so pronounced as to maintain statutory provisions whereby Jews were barred from entering the realm.

The first rays of the sun were breaking over a scaur in the mountains almost due north. By my watch it was not yet one. I began to retrace my steps to the parsonage grounds—as in a dream. I was getting aware of the morning breeze beginning to blow as usual from the north-east. As I stopped to listen—impelled by I know not what—I was impressed by the moaning of the sea about the beach

— — — — — — — — —

Soon also the forest of pines and birches were sighing in chorus about me. It brought to mind the fanciful tale of the mythical aerial "Riders of

Aasgard''—

''The traveller throws himself
prone in the road,
''Woe, 'tis the din of the Aasgard
riders—.''

Or, one might fancy with the more old-fashioned bonders, that the Helgoe spirits, allowed certain liberties at night, were hastening home to rejoin their dust in the ancient necropolis ''just as the first rays of the sun illumined the eastern windows of the old church''—muttering complainingly as they flit through the foliage— —

As I approached the custodian's lodge through the garden, I was hailed by Dunny, running toward me in great excitement, arrayed in pajamas and a cravenette. His eyes were stareing and he looked pale, wan and perturbed. He evidently had some difficulty in pulling himself sufficiently

together to talk. In a moment his condition changed to one of embarrassment.

"Where—where have you been all night? By the shadows of Tartarus! This place is haunted, or I am going crazy; feel my pulse."

I humored him in this. Artists are queer beings. Their nervous system is not constructed like in common, every-day humans.

"I have been taking lessons in Norse". said I. Then, as I saw the distress in his face, I asked reassuringly if the blessed damosel had gotten on his nerves.

"To-morrow I leave this island for good." said he. "I am tired of the frolic".

Recalling the early part of the night, I said to him, "Do not let it worry you. You have heard the Night Carpenter. Now confess."

"'Formerly obscure, it now seems beclouded,' or how is it Ibsen says it

in the scene of Peer and the Boyg? The Night Carpenter, you say?"

"When I said Night Carpenter, I wot whereof I speak", said I, "as I had an introduction to him last night. He was busy in the old carpenter shop a little before midnight, which fact goes to show that he is an imposter; as the real fellow, according to all laws governing in the premises, never works overtime, hence is not supposed to be seen or heard before the stroke of twelve. But I tell you who these ghosts of Helgoe are. They are not the dead but the living. I suspect the husmen."

"B' Jove, is it possible?"

"I expressed only a suspicion," said I.

After a pause I said: "Try this smoker, it will steady your nerves. Now, let us sit down on this bench and talk it over. To leave in haste would be surrendering to the enemy. The wisest course to my mind lies in never letting

on that we are affected by pseudo-phenomena of this sort.''

In the course of our conversation I told my friend what happened the evening before as recorded above, and I ultimately obtained from him his story which was as follows:—

''I am not certain now that I was not dreaming,'' said he.

''I had just retired, fatigued after running around this holm.

''By the way, I think I know every cow-path through these two forests. I was lying down ponying myself along in the scene of Peer and the Boyg, with Archer's translation and just commencing to get very sleepy when my attention was drawn to the clatter of a galloping horse coming up the drive from the east bay. I remember it struck me as something unusual on this island, but not impossible. As the rider passed the church, its broad walls echoed back the hoof-beat with great force. Before

I had reflected on the phenomenon a minute, the rider was reining up his horse somewhere in the neighborhood of the east entrance to the old parsonage mansion. A door was opened, after which for a moment, all was quiet and I thought there was an end of it. A song-thrush in the lindens jarred in just as I tried to listen for further indications of the doings of our nocturnal wanderer. However, this came immediately. There was an exchange of three or four curt remarks. I failed to understand the conversation. Thereupon the mysterious intruder ascended the stairs. It was a heavy man's step, strong and determined, and the old stairs creaked under them. From the landing which is even with, and not far from the dormer-windows of the second story of the custodian's lodge (where we had our rooms) the nightly wanderer proceeded along the corridor. Then a door was opened in haste. One more step, then, after a

moment's pause, I plainly heard the exclamation 'Thruda' or 'Gyda'. It was a voice vibrating with tenderness and at the same time a fullness of a healthy manhood. Immediately thereupon came the sound of a dull, heavy, sickening crash followed by three or four quick steps. Then a cry as of a soul in despair rent the air. It was a long evanescent wail and the words *Min Gud* (my God). It either ended here or I am not aware of what followed. I am frank about it. Somehow a paralyzing terror was in my soul and beads of perspiration covered my brow. I was for a moment literally unable to move. A thought flitted through my brain that somehow I would be able to explain the phenomenon satisfactorily and cogently in the future and I almost laughed at myself, my credulity and my nervousness, such was my plight. Finally I was able to get to the window and look out. This gave me courage and eventually I put on my cravenette

and ran out to meet you, seeing you coming in the garden."

"We will investigate this matter at our leisure," said I, "as I am unable to account for it otherwise than that you may have been dreaming. Now we must get some rest." As we proceeded to our rooms I felt rather sorry for my friend with the artistic temperament.

The next morning nobody but ourselves seemed the least disturbed. The custodian appeared the same hearty fellow as usual, as he met us at breakfast and as I looked at him I felt remorseful for having suspected him of complicity in what I could not help but consider pranks on the part of the peasants. Discussions went high and we had a jolly time at table, as usual, forgetting at least the sting of our previous night's experience.

After breakfast there was a hasty consultation on our part to perfect plans of procedure. We determined not to appear to act hastily but to

"make haste slowly" in getting away, as we had plans to visit sundry places before our return to America.

In accordance with these plans we gained admittance one day to the old parsonage mansion proper with a definite purpose in view. The effusively kind, old Ogot was interviewed as by chance. As we had calculated, she soon grew reminiscent and by expressing curiosity, we were soon invited to inspect the apartments of the late reverend "herskab." The old lady knew the history of every room. The chambers, only a few of which were furnished, showed disinterestingly formal. One suite was reserved for his grace, the bishop of the Drontheim diocese when visiting the parish on his yearly tour of inspection as duly prescribed by Norwegian law. One suite was for the resident chaplain. The parson's study overlooked the church and the east bay—the "Bondervick." It had three windows and

the door-sill was worn hollow from long usage. It was here that the parson met his parishioners privately and it was from the landing near by that he hurled the worst of them bodily—to set an example;—with no regrets if a neck or a limb was broken in the descent. Of course that was some time ago,—before the time of the last parson or two. Ogot was not interested in these wild combats. She only sniffed and whimpered, the poor old soul, and looked miserable if we asked her questions, as she was "hard of hearing."

"Here sat the Father, himself, most of the day," she said, "as punctual as the clock to his meals, God bless his soul, and now dead and gone, good thirty years." A few more tears of reminiscent sentimentality on the part of the lachrymose lady and we were shown in turn the private rooms of the "herskab," the bonders' waiting room, library, nursery, where the Fa-

ther picked out the candidates for confirmation every first Monday after Easter, and rooms for all occasions and purposes and in all colors, some furnished and orderly, as stated, for special occasions of state, some vacant, but mostly with an odor of dust and decay.

There were certain rooms on the second floor which according to our plans we had a particular desire to inspect. These the old lady said were used only for storage and had never been opened the years she had been in the service of the last prests. So, after our inspection, the building was closed and locked up again and we accompanied the lady to the custodian's lodge where we dismissed her with a suitable reward. However, we had taken the precaution to withdraw the bar of a back door unnoticed by our chaperone so that we could make further investigation—and verify sundry suspicions—at our leisure. All of

these things we planned and talked about in English, which Ogot did not understand, while she was lecturing to us in Norse. To us it was a case of the end justifying the means.

The evening of the day we were shown the parsonage by Ogot, we spent considerable time with the peasants who sat smoking and story-telling on and about the approach to the large driveway into the main barn. We knew just how many men were employed on the island that day and we kept tally in case of manifestations unexplainable according to the science of matter. We had earlier that day journeyed to the *land-handler,* or country-shop, across the sound where we stocked up on choice chewing tobacco and strong cigars, with which to regale the crowd, whereas we ex-

pected to need their friendship and help in carrying out certain plans. The older men were to be depended on as friends but we did not trust the younger ones for sundry reasons. Young Vikings of to-day like the sea-wolves of eld hatch plans among them for mischief and romance, and go on lengthy excursions in the quiet of night to execute them. It is born and bred in them, and is chargeable not so much to ignoble motives as to exuberance of life and a spirit of wantonness and frolic. In the States, wherever the Norse are maintaining old country idealities, this custom of going on inconceivable yet innocent rampage—is well known. And that night we had evidence of more of it. Old Aslak was telling some experiences of his youth, which adventures, he evidently considered a representative chapter of his life's Magnum Opus.

"The bear-scare had seized the people of Thorvik-bygd one fall," said he,

just as the grain was being sheared. The soft earth about the sheep-stalls had repeatedly shown in the morning that Bruin had snoozed around there in the night, which goes to show that he was driven down from the mountains by hunger of no common degree. In this condition he would not hesitate to tackle big cattle or even people. Some of the grain-eating bears had done damage to the sheaves, a matter which the farmers that particular year could not well afford. Those days there was a peasant by the name of Hans Jerdet, who held land under the Thorvik estates and who went under the names of "Ferdy" and "Korkje," which were by-words with him. Whomever he met, it was constantly: 'Fine day to-day, ferdy,' or 'Nasty weather this, korkje'. The by-words were mutterings, half to himself and half to the one he talked to. He was a character known widely those days and also the butt of mischief-makers, who came

for miles to pester him.

"His little cottage of three rooms, his barn and patches of oat-fields lay higher up the slope than the larger farms, consequently further in the forest and nearer the fells. Therefore, he was one of the first visited by the bears. And on this account he suffered much annoyance, as the boys would stop him in his work, beckon him to come nearer, which, if he did—and it seems he usually did—he had a chance to regret as the question invariably would be 'Killed any bears lately, Hans?'

"By the way, Ferdy had a wife, Alet, and a daughter, Berrit. He also had a son. But the son turned out bad, and Ferdy disowned him altogether after the boy married a gypsy wench and started tramping with her and her relations. Ferdy even insisted Haldur —that was the son—was a changeling. He explained how one Christmas eve, when the boy was a month or two old he went out to the barn to give the

'creatures' their last feeding of hay, which was an extra one for the holiday. Times were hard and Berrit was working at Thorvik. He had been in the barn only a moment when he was aware that the Hulder-folks were busy about the premises. For one thing the hay-pull was gone. That was a spear-shaped stick used to extract hay from the hard mow in the loft above. Ferdy was a firm believer in and a friend of the hulder. He therefore suspected that things were not right in the house —whither he consequently hastened and found—instead of his own child—a brat of about the same age wrapped in the worst imaginable rags. What did Ferdy in all his hulder-wisdom do but open the stove-door and swing the changeling as though he was about to hurl it into the flames. But just as he made the last great swing with his long arms toward the open door of the stove—out went the fire with a 'rushing noise,' while

much tittering and laughing were heard in the darkness around. Then Ferdy felt sure he was appointed to bring up a changeling—which appointment he did not dare—for his life—not to fill to the best of his ability. So Haldur was called a Hulder-brat both at home and at school and it is no wonder he turned out bad.

"Now, when the bear-scare was agitating the people, Ferdy spent most of his nights on the big flat stone in front of his door, beating a big spade with a hammer. Tho' never afraid of the Hulder, the mere suspicion of bears unmanned Ferdy completely. Due to this chicken-heartedness it was often said of him he was 'no Norseman'. So one evening four of us young chaps planned to have some fun at Ferdy's expense. We had been rather quiet for some time and looked forward to an all night of it. This time of the year it is dark as pitch, and we could locate one another only by the voice. How-

ever, we found the way across the mountains to Ferdy's place. There he stood banging away at his spade while Alet stood near enough to render moral succor in his distress. We went right down to his boat house, broke in, took his boat and carried it all the way up the lea and deposited it upside down in the middle of his largest barley-field. Of course, just as the moon was about to rise that night, Ferdy saw what looked like a bear in his field. Down came the old flint-lock and while Alet held him about the waist from behind to steady his failing knees, he succeeded at length in shooting several holes through his boat before he got on to our little joke. For in his younger days, Ferdy had been not a bad shot. He served in the war of 1814 under Lieutenant-Colonel Krebs at Matrand at the time Norway was forced by Napoleon and Charles John into the objectionable Scandinavian

union, now set at naught by the treaty of Karlstad of 1905.

"But before we returned home that night we had other experiences that were not so jolly. After our work of carrying Ferdy's boat such a long way, we were both hungry and thirsty and on a farm where we were acquainted we went into a *stabur* or store-house and helped ourselves to both food and drink. We had emptied our pocket flasks by this time and were not particular just how it tasted in the dark, so long as we knew it was food, for we had a long way home. We had some milk that tasted rather oddly, but it was the only thing to be found to slake our big thirst, so we dipped our mouths into the big flat wooden *ringers* and had our fill. On our way out, close by a tiny window where the moon shone in brightly, one of the boys stumbled against a little bed-cot with some force. And horrors, what do you think happened? Up into the

full glare of the moon-light rose slowly the withered, grinning face of an old legd-woman, who had died some days before. Now, a legd-woman is one who is given public charity in the nature of food and lodging for a prescribed number of days at assigned farms. We were not slow to rush out into the open as best we could. And what do you think happened then? Why, each found the faces of the others covered with blood. We were a pretty badly scared lot then, you may be sure. We were so mortally frightened by this incomprehensible sight—even though I say so myself—that we were sobered by it. Afterwards it came to light that we had been drinking fresh blood from cattle that had been slaughtered for the grave-ale over the old legd-woman. And as this had been deposited in wide, flat milk-ringers, we had stuck our noses into it, unsteady as we were, while drinking and somehow wiped the blood over our faces."

"And how do you account for the body of the legd-woman sitting up in the stabur?"—was asked.

"Old legd-Berritt had died in a sitting posture, and was so bent up with old age and rheumatiz that the body had to be put in splints to lie down straight in the casket. In this frame of splints the body was left for a number of days in the stabur and it was against this that one of us stumbled and knocked apart, so that the old lady what you may call 'followed her natural bent' and sat up."

We waited some time after Aslak had finished his story—that is after midnight—for repetition of the operations of the mysterious Night Carpenter. But nothing happened. As the men retired for the night, we kept an eye on their quarters. Then as all was still we proceeded very quietly to the parsonage mansion proper which we entered through the unbolted door. The night being as light as day, we had no difficulty in finding the rooms on the second floor east of the corridor, where we aimed to make investigations. These rooms, according to Ogot, were used for storage purposes, if used

at all. She had also mentioned that an accident had happened there long ago of such a nature as to make everybody shun them. To make our work more safe, we had padded our shoes, and felt that we had nothing to fear by way of detection as all the people on the island were hearty sleepers. However, the doors of the room we had come to examine, were securely locked. With no means at our disposal to open them except force—which would have attracted attention—we were compelled to suspend operations until we could devise a more effective plan.

On the next day our little circle was increased by a Docent Johansen of the Christiania university, who had come to Helgoe in the interest of the Royal Society of Archaeic Research. We accompanied the learned professor to a bracken in the pine woods where large rocks appeared in some sort of order as if arranged by human hands. This was the sacred grove of the pagan

bonders and the stones represented the foundation of the *hov* booth. The Docent lectured very interestingly as he examined his drawings and notes. Here then, the pagan Romsdalers gathered to invoke the aid of the Valhalla gods against the schemes of the evil-minded Vets. In the minds of the ancient people, the Dead and the Trolls were never able to enter the grove, but were doomed to the darkness without the stockade. The temples were invariably built so as to point north and south. In the side wing, which the Docent staked off, representing the Holy of Holies, the images of the deities rested on benches; those of Thor and Woden in the middle. On the 'stalli' or altar in the middle lay the holy ring. Here also all the oaths were made while the *gode* or priest wore the ring on his arm, which he also did during services, councils and "tings." As in Rome so also the Vikings maintained a sacred fire, which, if once extinct, could be re-

lit only from another *fylkis-hov.* The sacrificial rites consisted of slaying of the animal before the full view of the people. During these rites the men sat on lengthwise benches, which had a throne in the middle for the prominent men of the parish—who had distinguished themselves in warring on foreign princes and had carried the most plunder into the home valley. "In this we see," remarked the Docent spicily, "a prototype of the present prominent member of the board of deacons and the loud-mouthed individual in the amen corner." This is all the attempt at caste found among the Vikings. There were serfs, it is true, but these were foreigners captured in battle or native criminals. From this throne the men sat outward in order of rank as Viking chieftains.

The cross benches were for women who were always held in high esteem and great respect, wherein lies the source of greatness and superior

strength of these Norse sea-wolves.

The blood of the animal was collected and with it the congregation was stained, as were the images of the gods, the walls and doorcases of the temples,—the same as with the old testament Hebrews. The meat was cooked in great kettles and eaten with soup and ale. Afterwards more mead and ale were drunk. The walls were hung with rich curtains and tapestry with woven figures representing scenes from the sagas. There were also graven images of the gods. By the door were big casks of ale, from which horns and beakers were filled, so that these ancient people had a pretty pleasant time during worship and only very urgent matters kept them at home during the services. Across the fires, burning in long rows, the skaals were drunk. It is little to be wondered at that these Vikings were very loath to give up their form of worship, which is yet counted as one of the seven great re-

ligions of the world. In Normandy, the Valhalla gods were clung to by immigrated Vikings and their descendants as late as the 13th century and in the midst of established Christianity. Some writer has said that the Asa-faith "ranks ethically higher than the carnal religion of the Greeks and Romans,"—that it was a sort of ethical constitution and inspiration which aided at least greatly in building up much of the character found in the indomitable Norse.

It was Gauka Thorer who said: "We be neither heathens nor Christians. We have faith in nothing except ourselves and the strength of our arms and luck of victory. And with this faith we slip through sufficiently well," a sentiment not necessarily to be admired, but which shows the self-reliance of these people.

The soil of Norway is not rich, and the people to succeed must economize. We see this national spirit of economy

reflected in their religion in the case of Ymir's death. Not only the normal members of the body were used, but even the maggots, which turned into dwarfs, skilled and cunning creatures, though spiteful and sullen.

Later that day we accompanied the Docent to the church, where we inspected among other things the ancient weapon-shed, standing before its entrance. Here the worshippers deposited their battle-axes, cross-bows, swords and spears as they passed in. Part of the ceiling had been removed displaying the chopped-up rafters. It was the custom to hurl the swords and axes into the rafters so that they required considerable strength to be extracted when wanted after the services. As may be expected it came occasionally to quarrels and bloodshed when the

men thronged about this shed to get their weapons.

From the weapon-shed we entered the church proper—one spacious room with half-lofts and connecting sacristy. The window openings showed a wall of masonry four feet thick. As these were slanted to admit light the whole had the clumsy appearance of a fortification. The wooden floor about the communion rail was worn hollow with the feet of penitents. The sacristy showed blank without the vestments, books and sacred vessels. Behind the altar, inclined against a corner stood several halberds with dust-covered ropes and tassels.

More interesting however were the slabs of soap-stone or iron laid in the floor, raised into parapets along the walls, or heaped in the corners of the sacristy. These had originally decorated graves and bore inscriptions in Norse, Old-Norse or Latin. In the course of time the graves these slabs

once represented had been made to accomodate other tenants. One of the slabs bore the following Latin inscription:—

In Memoriam
Hic Jacet Hare Occidentalis
Sive Manu Fortis
Generis Nobile Vir
Sacerdos Helgoensis
MDCCCI-MDCCCXIII
Non Fugitis

One of the peasants by the name of Thorstein who had been sent along to open the door and answer questions, winked his eye at us as we examined it. "There are many people looking at that stone," he said. "My grandfather, who 'served' on the island as a boy says it is about a preacher who was a sort of wild chap and had much trouble with the bonders. It is even said of him that he has been seen and heard about the parsonage after his death."

That evening we resumed our investigations in the ancient parsonage mansion and succeeded in prying open a window from a small balcony, thereby gaining access to the rooms whence, according to our calculation emanated the noises that had startled Dunny some nights previously. Heavy curtains partially covered with a layer of dust that hung in threads everywhere —screened the windows. It was only by holding these aside that we were able to have some little light enter the rooms. The three connecting rooms were quite bare of furniture and the heavy dust on the floor had evidently not been stirred for some generations. It felt mealy under foot. There was, therefore, no ground for suspecting the younger peasants of having entered these rooms. Nor was there any clue to the rumored mysterious accident. As we moved about, we came upon the only article in the room beside the curtains. This stood in a corner of

the smallest of the rooms as if forgotten by the movers, or—as it was rather too large an object to be accidentally overlooked,—it might have been left in this out of the way place intentionally.

Scooping aside the dust that covered it with our hands, we found it to be a huge chest, such as we have since learned were used by navigators in the 18th and first part of the 19th centuries and perhaps earlier. It had curiously carved sides and lid. The edges of the lock-plate and the huge hinges that projected forward over the lid were wrought into curling, twisting, whimsical arabesques. It likewise had strong iron bands that enclosed the sunken carved pannels of various sizes. As we stood by it, it reached to our elbows in height and must have required several men to carry when packed. Having inspected its exterior, I raised the lid to where it leaned against the wall. I was about to stoop

down and investigate its interior when Dunny, who was going to the window to try to obtain more light, thereby caused the boards of the floor to yield to his weight. For a moment I beheld the heavy lid wavering in equipoise, then it fell back in place with a loud bang that startled us. We realized that had the lid fallen when a person was stooping over examining the inside, there might have resulted a serious accident,—possibly a decapitation. Summoning up our courage we again lifted the heavy lid, Dunny holding it in position while I stuck my hand into the corners and found it empty except for what apparently was a collection of light fabrics now turned partially to dust.

The following days—before we effected our final departure from Helgoe—we discussed this subject, neither of us being willing to accept the possibility of "spectral noises." In one of the literary reviews that came to the custodian's library, there was an extract of the reports of the London Dialectical Society, Sir John Lubbock, pres. Here was a body of scholars and scientists of renown, with the avowed purpose of investigating such subjects as "Are the Dead Alive?" etc., subjects that to both of us had always looked absurd. Such leading scientists as Flammarion, Prof. Pio Foa and Lom-

broso of Turin and Oliver Lodge of England were quoted in defence of their findings as published by Sir Wm. Crookes, one clause of which is as follows:—

"It is established on the part of the London Dialectical Society (after close and lengthy investigation) that sounds of varied character, apparently proceeding from articles of furniture—floor, walls of a room, etc., (the vibrations accompanying which sounds are distinctly perceptible to touch) occur without being produced by muscular action or mechanical contrivance."

However, the facts as found having been stated, the reader will draw proper conclusions. The writer has no interest in—nor is it his intention to establish claims for or against the quasi-science of occultism.

Harold Hardgrip.

As the year's eider ducklings were given their first lessons in swimming by their solicitous mothers about its shores—we bade adieu to Helgoe—sacred in memory, taking a very hearty leave of our host and his household. It was towards the end of the short Northern season and already faint traces of yellow and red showed in the birch copse. The blush of the heather on the fells was more bronzed with less of the green but more of the gold of Napoleon.

At the suggestion of Thorstein, the husman, we had arranged to call on his sire, Hans, in the Rodvenfjord. His

homestead was in a side-valley a short distance from our first relay-station.

As we rounded the point of Aastad, where we entered the Rodvenfjord proper, the mountains we knew and had come to love so well—at once changed in appearance as by the stroke of a magician's wand.

Fresh, deep rust-colored streaks down the southern side of the Ox indicated recent land-slides. If a farm-gard happens to be in the path of these terrible, thundering masses of earth and rocks as they whizz downward—if any member survives by some miracle, he soon starts clearing a site for a new home close by—to live the same life of jeopardy yet—never of anxiety.

In the course of the afternoon we arrived at the gard of crustaceous old Hans Houg of that ilk, the sage of Romsdal. We presented ourselves with greetings from Thorstein together with

what reverence was due his position according to the custom of the land,—and that is how we ultimately obtained what is considered by certain people of the valley to be a correct and satisfactory solution of our mystery of Helgoe.

After having made our offerings and libations to show sincerity of purpose, we were received gracefully by Hans and invited to take a seat under the spreading pines that overshadowed his cottage. These pines formed the tattered and irregular fringes of the great body of the forest stretching in front and below us, in the bottom of the valley and up on the other side. The house and lawn were enclosed by a stone fence, where numerous wild rose-bushes clamored for a foothold. Roundabout on the ground lay scattered pink petals, while the hips still hung red and full among the leaves.

Through the open windows we could see the shiny, white floor of hard-pine boards—strewn, as custom is, with tiny tops of juniper bushes, the aroma of which is at the same time pleasant and salubrious. The unpainted window casings were of the same snowy white hue, telling of industrious feminine hands.

"You see," said Hans, after we had talked awhile, and were coming to the subject uppermost in our minds, "man has his origin in two elements, just like the mythological ash-tree Yggdrasil. The one is the home of Evil and the other the abode of Good. We all develop as we live—from both of these sources; yet few equally from each, still nobody from one alone to the total exclusion of the other."

After looking for a moment over the tops of the pines below and in silence unbroken—as in a sanctuary—he continued:

"The Norns spin the life-thread of some men with such special art that their careers are thereby greatly entangled. There are men of such large physical proportions that they are unable to procure ready-made apparel of sufficient size to fit them. These men are handicapped, particularly if poor. The unscrupulous dealer in clothes tries to adjust the unfortunate man's form to what garments he may have in stock, instead of going to the trouble of altering the garments. It is cheaper thus. But the worst of it is that these men have it dinned into them early and late that their heads, feet or forms are 'too big'. Likewise there are men of such large mental status, that failing to have our small estimates and measures fit them we get a habit of looking on them with a certain feeling of ill-will and moral disdain. If these Intenser Natures, for reasons unknown, choose to display what we call a weak side, we seize on

these apparent loop-holes in their character to destroy them, forgetting to look on them as entities composed of many varied parts. One such character is Ibsen's Masterbuilder, who found a sort of salutary self-torture in letting his wife do him an injustice."

With the above as a moral preamble, we were later told by Hans in brief the following suppressed details of the life of the Helgoe parson, Harold von Westen—Hare Occidentalis of the Latin inscription—together with their historic background.

"Considered as an entity, then," said Hans, "Harold Prest was a man of courage which yet goes for much with us bonders. The good old types of former days are fast dying out and disappearing. These days people do nothing but talk, whereby the race is degenerated and weakened. Now as to Harold Prest, Romsdal owes much to him. It is due to him that the census shows greater intellectuality here than in any other rural parish in the kingdom. He organized reading circles, sanger-fests and 'stev-gildes' or improvisation contests. The land was waking after its long slumber lasting

from the time Monkish Latin quelled our literary power of scaldic days. The people of those days were comparatively ignorant and consequently superstitious. By royal decree the religion of Luther had been ordered into effect in 1536. Gervinus tells us that with most people this was like exchanging outer garments. The priest of Rome resigned himself with little effort to the new order of things forswearing forever the Vatican and everything with it connected. Instances, however, are on record where priests clinging tenaceously to their Mesale Romanum were driven out of the parsonages to seek refuge in mountain caves difficult of access, where they continued to worship according to their old faith. In some valleys the people rose ineffectively against the churchly innovation, very much as had their ancestors against St. Olaf introducing Christianity five centuries earlier.

"The Nineteenth century was opening inauspiciously for Scandinavia as it was for other countries of Europe. In London there were the bread-riots. In France and Germany famine and wars followed in the wake of the great Corsican comet. In 1801 a British fleet allowed the joint courts of Denmark and Norway 48 hours in which to withdraw from the Northern Maritime League, organized to oppose British tyranny on the high seas. A month later the Battle of Copenhagen was fought and won by the one-armed, half-blind Admiral Nelson. A protracted truce followed.

"At this time Norway was held in bondage by Denmark, queer as this seems to us to-day. We had no university. Our parsons came from Denmark and were at times selfish, impious, tyranous autocrats with no ability, no decency and no heart.

"Thus came to the Helgoe parsonage soon after the Battle of Copenhagen--

and as a result of it, one of those Danish prests that were forced on us by royal appointment. The "von" indicates aristocracy and it was said he sought and obtained this distant parish because he wished to forget sundry matters that disgraced his country, of which he was a nobleman of no mean rank. Those days it was not a requirement, *per se,* to have graduated in theology to fill the position of Norse prest.

"Harold von Westen brought with him only one piece of luggage to Helgoe, a heavy, iron-bound sailor's chest, large enough to live in, if necessary. During the last decade the parish had been without a parson and it was with much concern to our great-grand-fathers that the rumor spread that a new parson had arrived at Helgoe. The last one had been whipped like a bad boy by a clan of bonders and had taken his leave without the formality of saying good-bye. News did not travel fast

those days and it took a year or more before the Department at Copenhagen was aware of the true state of affairs at Helgoe. There are still people in the valley who hear their great-grand parents tell of those hard and wicked times. Truly the world is growing better here in Romsdal, as sure as I am alive.

"As to the new parson,—a delegation was ordered to spy on him and report. In the dark of the night they raised ladders outside his study-windows to observe his habits and doings. When it was found that he was producing dense clouds of smoke from a long pipe, this was reported as in the young parson's favor.

"On one occasion, during his first years at Helgoe, offensive remarks were cast at him as he passed through a flock of bonders that had tasted too often or too long of their pocket flasks of brandy-wine. The prest was on his way to church to read the text on a

Sunday. He stopped as he heard the words, took off his sacred vestments which he flung aside together with his mess-book. Thereupon he seized the offensive bonders and tossed them, one after the other, over the stone-wall into the cemetery. 'There liest the Parson', said he pointing to the books and vestments on the ground—addressing the congregation—'and here before you stands Harold the Soldier, which one of us prefer you?'

"Then turning to the surprised bonders who tried to get on their feet between the graves, he said, 'Now rot there you carrions, for there you belong— you stench in God's nostrils.'

"From that day he was held more in respect by the bonders, although his respect for the bonders was never very great—to his dying day.

"In stormy weather he refused to cross the sound to administer the sacraments to the sick and dying, for

many of his predecessors had in this way found a wet grave.

"'Let the dogs die' he is quoted as saying, 'they will never know the difference, and the parish is the better off' which was not a very nice thing to say for a prest.

"As to the charge that he held nealogistic views, there is less ground for this, for Harold was not well versed in theology, yet he could mess so well with his deep bass voice that old women wept when they heard him.

"One Summer he disappeared from Helgoe, and it was thought that the parish was once more to see a change in the pastoral incumbency. But that was not to be. In less than a year Harold was back and had a young Mrs. Parson with him. She was a Southern lady, dark-skinned and black-eyed, such as none had ever seen in these parts. It was rumored among the bonders that she was no Christian lady, at least not Lutheran as was commanded by the

king. Thus the strained relations between the pastor and his flock was not improved. The bonders were hard-headed and the pastor was unyielding. On more than one occasion were deputations of bonders thrown bodily in a heap at the bottom of the stairs leading from the pastor's study. That accounts for his subriquet of 'Hardgreipi' that is hard-grip (Manu Fortis of the Latin inscription).

"The new mistress of the parsonage never appeared at church, a matter that aroused the bonders' ire. It was the same as saying to them: 'I do not want my precious, outlandish wife to mix with you bonder-dogs even at prayer.' Then the rumor grew that she was a Catholic and a Catholic to a bonder is something pretty bad. The real reason was perhaps that she was afraid to pass through the throngs of bonders that gathered thickly about the church on meeting days, not only before and

after the services but during them as well.

"Unmerciful in his chastisement and reproaches and promising the refractious a vengeful fate from Heaven, it came to a crisis when famine in 1808 to 1812 struck the land. The bonders subsisted on bark-bread at the same time as they had war with Sweden in the last year or two of the famine. There were those that connected in their ignorance Pastor Harold with the hard times; that he had summoned famine from God to chastice the wicked people of the parish. Supervision was lax and it was seldom that the bonders could lay their charges before the bishop, as this dignitary did not come to Helgoe oftener than once in three or four years. And even bishops and prests were not always very zealous followers of Christ but some of them addicted to all the vices on the calendar, especially, perhaps, to the use of liquors. One of the worst instances

was the parson of Haaland parish.

"Hr. Christian of Haaland, as he was known, allowed drunkenness to interfere with the duties of his office to such a degree that he was hailed before the "Domskapittel" three times for not celebrating mass on the prescribed days. The first time he was fined three dollars of the realm; the second time, which was two years after the first, he was fined six; and the third time, one year after the second, he was dismissed from office.

"Yet there was no charge of drunkenness against Harold. With some of the better families of the parish he stood well for he was not a bad man to those that knew him well and treated him right. Finally the thread of his destiny lead to the fatal crisis, which came as follows and is quickly told.

"It was the time Romsdal was visited by the worst storm in its history. It commenced on the fifth day of August. The rain fell in sheets. The rivers, es-

pecially the Saetre, Sylle and Skorg grew to a point where they filled the greater part of the valley. Querns, bridges, residences and lumber mills were washed down into the fjord together with people, cattle and trees torn up with root. Where the river-bed was of rock, there the large boulders that were washed down from the high-fells made a noise like thunder. The forest was cleared so that the fjord looked like a moor or bog strewn with bushes. Besides the rivers doing great damage directly, the rain loosened the soft earth and gravel on the mountains, causing terrible land-slides that washed whole valley-sides into the fjord.

"Having held services at Vaage, an annex parish, Hr. Harold was there delayed by the storm. When there was no cessation after two days he ordered his men to get ready to take him back to Helgoe. After a consultation, the men refused thus to 'tempt their maker'.

"Now, when the bonders refused to return to Helgoe, Hr. Harold launched a *ferring* and set out alone, drifting with the storm eastward until he landed at Helgoe at its most distant point from the parsonage. It was a daring piece of work which might have turned out bad only for the parson's prowess.

"Arriving on the island he found the parsonage herd of horses grazing nearby, and mounting one of the animals, he rode to the parsonage coming up by the way of the east bay. At the moment he entered their rooms on the second floor, Mrs. von Westen, who did not expect her husband, was busy arranging certain small garments in the big chest, as custom was in those days.

"As the parson entered stealthily as if to cause his wife a pleasant surprise, the boards of the floor yielded to his great weight, thereby causing the heavy iron-bound lid to fall—decapitating the young woman before his eyes.

"In his immense sorrow, a veritable Berserker rage came over the parson, blunting his perceptibilities. He discharged the servants and refused to let any of them touch the inanimate body with their coarse, peasant hands,—cursing them as they cowered before him, likewise cursing their fathers and mothers, the other bonders of the parish, the husmen and the whole country, ending with forcing the servants to leave the island in the same reckless manner that he himself that same day had come to it. After some days, he set to work and fashioned a casket with his own hands, having learned the use of carpenter's tools in the Danish navy. Likewise, it is thought that he dug the grave with his own hands and personally placed his wife's body in it. After that nobody ever saw or heard of Harold von Westen in these parts. After many years, friends raised the tablet with the Latin inscription in the Helgoe church".

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